

The Great Corrector

Percival W. Wells



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The Great Corrector

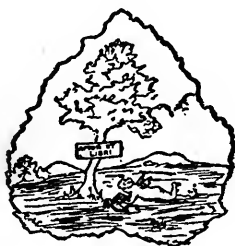
MORE OR LESS A VITAL SATIRE

BY

PERCIVAL W. WELLS *a friend*

AUTHOR OF

LILIES OF THE VALLEY, THE MARTYR'S RETURN
THE SON OF MAN, ETC.



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FORETASTE

JAMES CONKLIN had studied Demonology for years. It was more than a hobby with him—his favorite pursuit. Not having had the privilege of taking a thorough course in Theology when he was a young man, he made up for this lack by reading all the books he could find on the subject of Hell and its keeper. There was not even a pamphlet in existence which he did not eagerly peruse in the hope of adding to his knowledge of the subject.

Homer he knew by heart, as well as the sixth book of Vergil, and Dante's Inferno. Milton's Paradise Lost, in spite of its many crudenesses, stuffing, patches and strange mixtures, had long been as familiar to him as his ABC. He studied the Bible every day in the hope of coming across something new about Satan and his wicked elements.

He even plowed through the early church fathers and the later sons, both natural and unnatural, whenever he could summon the courage. It seemed to him, as indeed it has seemed to many better men than he, that he could some day learn the whole truth by reading; but in this he was sadly mistaken. The more printed matter he studied, the farther away he went from the solution of his problems, until at last in his flashes of sanity he prayed to be delivered from his madness, yea even to be borne off by the Evil One to the final home below. James Conklin was verily possessed of a devil, though he realized it not.

It happened one late afternoon in November, when the days grow quickly short, that he struck a sulphur match in order to light the gas. The elements set free by the ignition ascended into his nostrils and almost strangled him.

"The Devil!" he cried with a loud voice.

Suddenly the room became filled with a greenish light; the odor of brimstone grew stronger and stronger, until it choked out what little air was left in Conklin's lungs. He gasped for breath, and sank weakly into the nearest chair. Immediately the Devil stood before him.

"What under the earth do you want with me?" the fearful visitor demanded, stroking his lips with the end of his tail.

Conklin did not lack nerve. He saw in a second the chance he had sought his whole life-time. He coughed some of the sulphur out of his bronchials, stuttered, and then found his voice.

"You are a hell of a man to disturb an innocent person thus in his own domicile!" he rudely exclaimed. He imagined he could intimidate.

"Not on your sweet life!" the Devil replied. "I have had experience before with *innocent* people, who summoned me in somewhat the same manner that you employed, only to deny their pur-

poses after it was too late. I am the Deuce. Here is my card"—and he handed a two-spot of hearts to Conklin.

As the latter's fingers touched it, the card burst into flames and was consumed in an instant. The Devil watched with curling lips as the man drew back, pale from fright; he was disappointed, however, if he thought that Conklin would plead for mercy.

"I perceive plainly that what they have written about you has not all been a pack of lies," said James calmly, after swallowing two or three times to restore confidence, not to speak of spittle. "It is a pleasure to see you, I am sure. Will not your satanic majesty have a chair?"

The Devil smiled approvingly, and took the proffered seat. "You are a cool one," he remarked, pulling a long cigar out of his vest pocket and lighting it with a breath. "Won't you smoke?"

"Why— ye-s, at least a cigar, thank you."

"A-hem! I feel strangely drawn

toward you, I must confess. You remind me a lot of Deacon Dowling. *He* was a corker. Why, it took me twenty years to get him. We had a little bargain that he was to come with me at the end of ten; but he continually put me off with one excuse or another, until finally I had to take him by surprise. You should have seen him fume when he got to hell! He was a hypocrite, and tried to hide under the mantle of the church,—but we found him all right, ha ha! You are a straightforward man, on the contrary, and have never molested anybody. You are outside of my pale. I have no power over you. Tell me frankly what you want with me.”

“Now you are talking, Satan. I’ll come right to the point. Can you take me to hell for a short visit, and show me around—over the whole plant? I have read much about you, and according to most reports you are considered an affable chap.”

“Well, seeing that it is you, brother

Conklin," replied Satan grimly, "I'll make an exception in your case, if you are determined. Nevertheless, I will not be responsible for any damages in case of fire. We issue no insurance policies, you understand. You will have to run your own risks. All I can do is to give you one of our asbestos visitor suits and warn our imps not to harass you."

"Well, that is very kind of you," said Mr. Conklin enthusiastically. "When will it be most convenient for you to call for me?"

"Tomorrow night at twelve. You will be as welcome as the many prominent men who have been received before you, some of whom had no return coupon. Have no fear for yourself, however, Mr. Conklin: the fates are with you. Good-night."

CHAPTER I

THE DESCENT

AT the appointed hour the Devil appeared at the home of Mr. Conklin, announced as before by green light and brimstone fumes. He took his daring guest gently under his mantle, and whirled away through the air, invisible to human eyes, at a horrid rate. At length they arrived at the summit of a high mountain, crowned with an immense crater, into which Satan sped like a meteor; and, coming to a sudden stop within, he dropped his breathless burden and placed him upon his feet.

They were in a large room furnished and decorated in the modern style, quite similar to the appointment of the waiting-room in a big department store—Greenhat's, Geordan and Arsh's, or Wan Maker's.

"You must register here," said the Devil, pointing to a writing table on which lay a guest-book. "Just burn your name at the top of the next page, and then we will rest a while before going below. This is our top-floor office, recently remodeled by the owner of one of our great Ne Ork stores; I like his work: I gave him a vacation of a week for doing it. Perhaps you may meet him downstairs.

"I was so much pleased with the tall sky-scrapers of Ne Ork, because they bring me an immense patronage, that I had this building put up. Our patrons appreciate it. There is not the least difficulty in heating it, even in severe weather. We use the lower floors as overflow furnaces, with sound-proof partitions between, in order that the inmates won't disturb each other with their yells. You see, we keep up to date; otherwise there would be no fun in this business. It is kind of hard to change over the old things, to be sure;

but then—we have plenty of skilled labor.

“When you are ready, Mr. Conklin, we shall take the ’elevator. You will be surprised to see whom we have for an ’elevator boy. Everything has to change with the times. There is little real poetry abroad nowadays, on account of its being a mechanical age; and we must keep pace. We rarely receive visits from poets here, though there are lots of bad poetasters down stairs being corrected by Bald Spitman, one of our chief torturer trustees. Come along, and don’t be afraid.”

They walked arm in arm through the beautiful hall to the ’elevator door, where Satan pressed the button seven times.

“The boy just took a load down to the lowest circus,” he explained with a smile, “but he is nearly up here by this time. He is very slow, as one might expect of a boy of his years. Let us look at the mottoes while we are waiting.”

He pointed first to a large sign which hung over the 'elevator door. It read:

"LEAVE ALL PITY BEHIND."

"Revised version," chuckled his majesty. "We shorten the corners whenever we can. Perhaps Dante would not approve of it. How things have altered since he and the Mantuan poet descended through the Italian woods! Our methods now are much less poetical, yet they do fairly well. What stock do Mellicans put in grandiose verse? They are more versed in watery stock. That old Italian road is used still as a back passage; the dynamiters and other destructive persons are thrown down through there, since we are afraid that they might blow up our lovely new quarters; we show *them* no quarter, ha ha! Look at the sign yonder to the left—'DO NOT PLAY WITH FIRE!' Do you not think it appropriate? Well, here comes the boy."

At the end of an hour, which seemed

an eternity to Conklin, the 'elevator came up with a mighty rush of hot air, which blew through the cracks in the door with such force that it knocked Conklin off his feet and singed his eyebrows.

"Hell-o!" cried Satan as he helped him rise. "I forgot to paint you with our fire-proof liquid and give you an asbestos coat. It is best to do it now. Follow me into the actors' dressing-room."

Conklin did so; and in a few minutes he reappeared rigged out in a white coat that put Mark Twain's to shame. On the top of the hood, which, fortunately, he could not see, were a couple of small horns—symbols of cuckoldry.

"Fire away, Satan," he said, "and show us what you have."

The 'elevator door was opened cautiously, and a weazened old face, which seemed to be a relic of the flood, was thrust out. Hot flames wheeled round the eyes; a fetid breath issued from the

toothless mouth, almost overcoming Conklin a second time. Then, when the mechanic perceived who had called, he swung wide the door, and in a cringing manner begged his master's pardon.

"All right this time, old boy," said Satan with an imperious gesture, "but watch out that it does not happen again. Haven't I told you over and over again that whenever I ring seven times you are to take charcoal tablets, even if they do hurt your stomach, and ascend at top speed? When did you shave last?"

"Early this morning, Sir."

"That is right. I hope you used anti-septics?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Mr. Conklin, allow me to present to you my old friend Charon. He is still in the business—exporting spirits, and though a bit antiquated he will learn. He has certainly taken a fall out of Dr. Hustler. Congratulate him on his new uniform"—he whispered—"he is quite proud of it."

"Which floor, Sir?" demanded the old water-rat, now transformed into a decent 'elevator-buoy.

"Hell in general," responded the wicked One, sweeping his arm through the air in a wide circle. "We wish to show the whole thing, with the exception of one or two of our secret orders, to Mr. Conklin. He may be able to do some up-to-date advertising for us when he gets back to the underworld on earth, and say a good word for our special bargain counters. Stop at the first circus, Charron, and go gently."

In spite of being carried down with great consideration, according to Satan's strict behest, Conklin could not endure the awful speed of the dropping 'elevator; it seemed that his stomach had been left behind at the reception room, and his head whirled dizzily; he lost consciousness. Three hours later he was awakened by a tremendous clap of thunder on the left. Blinding lightning flashes followed one another in swift

succession, first white, then blue, then green. The odor of brimstone mingled with that of burning flesh was almost suffocating. Above the din of thunder, which came constantly, plainly rose to the sickened ears of Conklin horrid screams—the cries of the tortured: he was in the first circle, the Circus Maximus!

CHAPTER II

THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS

"DON'T be alarmed, James," the Devil whispered in his wounded ear, "nothing may hurt you here. Perhaps I had better put a pair of our new sound-proof plugs—designed by a Ne Orker just the other day—in your ears. You will still be able to hear my voice with perfect ease: nobody ever misses that! Here you are—had 'em in my pocket. Handy thing to keep out too much sympathy as well as noise:—you remember our special maxim nailed over the 'elevator door upstairs? Of course we aristocrats are hardened to the little complaints we run up against down here.

"This is the great Circus, designed by Brother Wite after the old Roman plan. Wite has done a lot for me. Here

dwell the HYPOCRITES! Listen—ha! *They* are getting all that's coming to them, take it from me. This entire place is reserved especially for them, and I think they appreciate their reservation; at least their shouts would denote such."

"What are those numberless throngs of spirits being chased through the flames by others with three-tined pitchforks?" demanded Conklin, who by this time had become somewhat accustomed to his new surroundings and began to take an active interest in all that was going on. "Why, this is more entertaining than the Hippodrome!"

"Yes, those are Presbyterians pursued by Congregationalists. They are having a bit of fun illustrating their creeds. They seem to enjoy it, don't they? They are having a hot time. It would take too long to enumerate the names of all, and besides I do not wish to create a slander or start gossip, so you will excuse me if I do not introduce you to

them personally. There is not a man or woman here who did not do harm in the world by hypocrisy; they are hardened sinners, and we are trying hard to soften their hearts. It takes years—ha!—centuries to burn through the outer shell. As soon as the pitchforks make the least impression, we double the intensity of the flames, thus spurring them on to renewed efforts. It pays to follow them up closely.”

“Who are those just appearing round the corner sticking single-pointed spears into the backs of the Congregationalists?”

“They are Unitarians. Behind them come the hypocrites who profess to be Disciples, and in their rear run the Methodists with hop, skip and a jump. There they come now! It’s a rare treat to see them go. Only the first three groups have spears—the rest run for sport. There are more, but it would take too long to enumerate them all, since their name is Legion. I must

point out, however, the Baptists, who quit the race once every day to take a bath in boiling water; those Episcopalians, whose apostolic succession never gets out of line and to whom we have lent protective soles for their feet in order to keep them in good trim for the special walking torture later: as a result, they are extremely fast, and almost outrun the flames—but not quite (to lay hands on them would be an imposition); and the Catholics, of whom we can accommodate only half as much as we should like (the other half are cast out into eternal darkness), and who have a separate playground just beyond. All hypocrites who never did any good we treat with triple heat and pitch head first into lakes of burning tar as soon as they have finished the second heat; they are at the other end of the Circus.

“Sometimes we get tired of this racing business, and then we have individual combats, letting them toss up for weapons—whether spears or nets, hot

swords or shields, and so forth *ad infinitum*. We have no end of amusements. Oh yes, they fight fiercely, Mr. Conklin; we never have to urge them, for we pair them off from different churches when they get tired of scrapping among themselves. Then the next time we set the Christians against the Infidels. By the way, have you the right time?"

Conklin reached under his asbestos coat and pulled out his Ingersoll.

"Quarter of twelve," he said. When he tried to put back the watch, it slipped from his nervous hand and fell blazing to the ground, where it was entirely consumed.

"Another Ingersoll gone to Hell," said the Devil with a short laugh. "I think we ought to be going. There is nothing very interesting to see at the present time. Only the hypocrites come here, people who committed no very grievous crime, but who did more harm than good by intentional hypocrisy. At the end of a thousand years we look

them over thoroughly with the hope of finding some who have repented, and if we are successful in our archeological researches we send them up to one of the elementary planets for a new start; the rest continue with the old treatment. It is amazing how admantine shells are softened under the electric blasts!" Thus he spoke, and beckoned Conklin towards the 'elevator.

"What are those great signs standing around the Circus limits?" demanded Mr. Conklin. "They look like advertising signs. What do you do—advertise the races and so forth when you have special events?"

"Not at all, my dear sir. That would do no good, because we have no trouble in filling up the courses, and it would be but a waste of time. Our advertisements are done in a different manner, and are almost entirely under the management of Brother Mammon. Those boards are optional courses: whoever wishes to drop out of line to study

the boards are at liberty to do so; but very few have ever taken advantage of the opportunity. They prefer to race the flames and forks. On the boards are printed selections from the old church fathers who mixed dead philosophy and foolish speculation with superstitious religion. They are too dry to burn—so dusty that they put the fire right out. Nobody ever stops to read them; if any do, we suspect that something is radically wrong, perhaps that our treatments are too severe, and we immediately send them down to the Experimental Station to be examined by experts.”

“Are there none of the children of Israel here, Satan?”

“Yes, yes! There are probably more of them than of any other race in proportion to their numbers. I do not object to calling some of *them* out, if you wish to speak to them personally. They are so hardened that a little publication would do them no hurt.”

His Majesty snapped his tail with a

sudden jerk, and lo! the whole company, millions of them, came to a sudden standstill, turned respectfully toward their master as if drawn by a magnet, and gave him the military salute.

"Bueno, chicos!" cried Satan, proud of their showing. "Let Noah come hither!"

A decrepit old Hebrew slouched forward from a distant point after a wait of forty or fifty minutes, and in three hours came up to where they were standing.

"Rather stiff around the joints, old boy?" the Devil asked of him.

"Yes, father. I'm getting 'most too aged to run around with the youngsters. I should feel more at home on water."

"Blow some of that fire out of your mouth, you silly child! Now don't talk to me that way. What in the deuce did you want to run away for, when the rain was coming down, and leave all the other poor devils to drown? You are a nice fellow, you are—then whine for

sympathy. You ought to be sent down to the Circus Hor—”

“Oh please, Mr. Devil, don’t mention it! I’ll be good! Boo hoo!”

It made Conklin’s heart palpitate from fear as well as from sympathy to see the old child snivel and try to wipe the scalding tears off his lashless eyelids and blink through the steam as they evaporated. He wanted to go away, yet there was something fascinating thus to be face to face with one of the ark-lights of history. He never expected to see Noah in this light, either!

“Go back to your companions, the sweet spirits of night—ah!” said the master, and after Noah had shuffled out of sight through the throngs, he turned to Conklin, smiling as he noticed the puzzled expression on his face. “I have often been puzzled too, Mr. Conklin. Lots of time I have started to do away with the old, out-of-date things and people here, but somehow they stick like leeches, and I can’t

get rid of them. You know how it is yourself:—how hard it comes to throw away the relics of your childhood days—dance-cards, silly letters from an old flame, a withered bouquet, a bit of faded ribbon. Such things grip the heart. You finger them over lovingly and then put them back into your drawer with a sigh, wishing all the time that you had the courage to drop them into the grate. The best we seem to be able to do is to reinterpret the old in a different way. So with these rheumatic fellows—however much they may delay the line, we still hang on to them. Anybody else you'd like to see or interview?"

"Why, to tell the truth, I have always had a desire to know who Adam was and what sort of a man he appeared. But I don't suppose he is here, is he?"

"Not at this moment, Mr. Conklin, but we can send for him. Just now he is on the roof-garden playing with one of our pythons. He was our first customer, and we are proud of him, because

of the immense patronage he brings us. We treat him a little differently from the rest. When we were in the old building, we had a little plot of land set apart with an apple-tree in it and a pond of hot pitch underneath. In a small hut Adam and Eve had to fry apples for us devils to eat when we got hungry. They took turns climbing the tree, one branch of which, called the Limb of Satan, was a trifle weak; and no matter how carefully they descended after throwing down the apples, they always pitched into the pool head first. We had a stuffed serpent hidden in the tree in order to frighten them. The place got to looking awfully seedy, and I was glad to be rid of it when we moved into our new quarters. It was too near to nature. Nowadays the style is to have things more artificial, more pleasing to the eye, with lots of mechanical devices.

“Now Adam and Eve live on the roof, as I said. The python plays with them as if he were a brother; and when they

forget who they are and why they are there, absorbed in their play, the snake leads them to a trap door, through which they fall. They land at the bottom of the 'elevator chute, rather the worse for wear. They never fail to land on their head, because they have a heavy conscience."

At that moment something white shot past the 'elevator door at a terrific speed.

"There they go!" cried Satan eagerly. "They just dropped! It's too bad, Mr. Conklin. You would hardly care to see them in their present condition—they are pretty well broken up about their fall. Some other time, perhaps, they will be at home. I tell you what I'll do—I'll show you over our hot-house. Come this way."

Satan led the way to a door, which opened into a large closet. When they were inside, he closed the door, and then pressed an electric button on the wall. The latter opened out, and as the parti-

tions swung back a telescope came into place before them.

"We can look through this, Conklin, and thus save time for you."

Conklin beheld, reflected on the mirror of the instrument, the interior of a long, narrow building. Rows upon rows of spirits sat facing in the same direction, toward the east. Imps with hoses were running up and down the aisles, pouring the contents into the faces of the unfortunate wretches—fire, burning fire! It was a fearful image.

"First we exhaust the air in the building," Satan explained calmly, "and when the spirits pant for breath we give them the fire-hose. What do you think of our apparatus? There are lots of Israelites in there, hypocrites, every one. Some of them are usurers who charged over six percent a month for their loans. You would be surprised to know what a large percent of our friends are women. They seem to be the worst offenders along the line of hypocritical gossiping.

Sometimes there is a great display of pyrotechniques in there,—when the imps meet with spirits that have been soaked in alcohol.”

Conklin shivered. “Who is that man that a little demon has been playing the hose on ever since we began to look—right on the neck, too?”

“Oh that is Zedekiah, who sneezed at the authority of Nebuchadnezzar. He has a stiff neck, and the way he holds his head bothers our little firemen. That’s all. Well, I guess that will keep you thinking for some time. We’ll surely have to go now.” He closed the wall and opened the door. Then they called Charon by means of the bell in the ’elevator. While they were waiting, Conklin asked whether any of the old Romans were to be seen.

“Very few, very few,” answered his guide. “You don’t seem to understand our situation. Nobody comes here who did not believe in Hell when alive on earth.”

"What?" asked Conklin in surprise. "No one here who did not believe in Hell?"

"Of course not. Why should she? Hell is thought of by people as being a place of eternal punishment for their neighbors. Naturally the neighbors who do not believe in Hell do not come here, for they have so much charity at least."

It seemed to Conklin that Satan was actually trying to keep from crying, since his voice could scarcely be heard through the wads, and clouds of steam rose from his eyes.

"Those who do not believe in a place of future punishment for other people may have their faults, but they seldom come here," he added.

At that moment Charon opened the door, bowing obsequiously. He happened to be going by when the bell was rung.

"After you, my dear sir," said Satan, and he ushered him into the machine politely. "Next floor, Charron!"

CHAPTER III

THE CIRCUS STULTUS

AS they were speeding down the well oiled well with the power of the devil added to gravity, Charon turned to the evil one and whispered hoarsely:

"Does Mr. Conklin blow from Lynn?"

Satan staggered up against the side of the 'elevator, but then recovered himself and frowned horribly. "It is not every horn that blows, Charon, even on the automobiles. The honk is becoming more popular than the conch. Your sally nearly took me off my feet, but I forgive you this time. Don't let it happen again. No matter how much you may make fun of our residents, you must always treat our guests with the greatest consideration and courtesy. We must guard our appearances, just as the Ne Orkers do." He relapsed into silence

and sat down beside James, who seemed sunk in thought. For several hours they descended thus, rapidly as lightning, yet smoothly as the B. & M. R. R.—Satan knows how to make all roads smooth. At last Charron applied the brakes, and they stopped without a jolt at the second story. The master touched his visitor lightly on the shoulder.

“We get out here,” he said in a kindly manner. “Hungry? Take these concentrated food-tablets, which will be as good as a dinner to you. You will be tickled almost to death when you swallow them, and they will last until you return to your happy home above. Don’t be afraid.

“Now this is the Circus Stultus, or Silly Circus, in which I take a great deal of pride. It is really an educational institution. Perhaps you know that I am not only one of the most famous educators of the world, but the special advisor of its schoolmen. There is a meeting on today in Chic Ago, but

as I have this engagement with you, I could not be there; so I asked Brother Mammon to take my place. He is my proxy very often. I am a busy man—hardly have time to see my wife and children.”

“Who is your wife, Satan?” asked Mr. Conklin. “I never knew that you were married. That is certainly news to me.”

“There are lots of things that the wisest men do not know about—even our experimental psychologists, whom you will meet in one part of this circus. Yes, I got married several years ago. Cleopatra is the girl. Ever heard of her?”

“Of course I have,” replied James, whose eyes had already recovered from the habit of sticking out of their sockets when they were startled: he was getting used to his new surroundings. “She was not a maid, however, Mr. Satan, when she came to you! Why lots of men, Caesar, Anthony—”

"I know, I know. You need not tell me her history: we have it on our books. It was I who helped give her prominence when she was alive on the earth. I was her first love! No, she was not a maid when I got her, but she was remade. And she is all to the mustard, too. She can play with asps all she wants to now, and they won't hurt her. If you will pardon me, I'll not take you to see her. A good-looking man like you might make her want to leave home, so I'll give her your regards, if you like, and we'll forego the rest. You came on business, anyway, and not on a social visit. Here we are in the playground of the Silly Circus, where we let the poor studes come for ten or twelve minutes once or twice a year in order to have them appreciate fully what they miss."

In truth, it was a beautiful playground like a park, only hundreds of times larger than Entral Park, Ne Ork, and with much cleaner water. Here

were swans swimming about; birds of all kinds and descriptions; tame animals running around in the grass and hiding in the trees; and flowers springing up everywhere.

"Sometimes we bring here people that teased or vexed other animals maliciously, to satisfy their own ego, and we watch imps, birds and animals tear them to pieces, only of course we sensitize their nerves first; and we put them together as soon as they are rendered piecemeal. We do that whenever we wish to have a little sport. This little stream is all that is left of the Phlegethon, which has dried up considerably on account of the heat in the new building. We send it down stairs through a tube well greased with Croton oil to be utilized for ice. Do you see yonder bed of violets? It has its spring underneath that bed. Should you like to rest awhile here in the park while I go down to see Cleopatra for a minute, or should you

prefer to go at once to the school-rooms?"

"Being very much interested in matters pertaining to education, I think I prefer to see the schools, if it is the same to you, Mr. Devil."

"Surely it is the same to me, Brother Conklin. Come along."

At last they arrived at the gates of the school, an immense building made of adamantine cement with only seventy-five percent of rubble in it. There was no attempt at architecture because, as Satan explained, the poor devils rarely saw the outside.

"The Phlegethon winds around the building three times in thousand mile curves—the largest brook-wind in the world. The furies guard the threshold, which is directly ahead. It's the largest door in the universe. Within, in the outer hall, the fates, the greatest rascals of mythology, spin their worm-eaten yarns. Are you taking note of all these valuable facts, Mr. Conklin? We cross

over by this bridge—largest of its kind in the country—Bridge of Size.”

The bridge groaned beneath their feet, because it was unaccustomed to carrying living burdens. As they approached the threshold, the furies rose and lifted their long, vicious whips to keep away the intruders; and they would have done Conklin damage had not Satan spoken to them harshly.

“Don’t you know better than to treat thus with disrespect my visitors, old hags? I have a good mind to send you down to the Circus Horri—”

“Oh please don’t!” they cried in unison, with tears filling their bleary eyes. “We’ll be good!” So they pleaded for mercy, which was immediately granted; and their hissing snakes cowered behind their heads, trying to hide from sight.

“I have a good mind to substitute good, new Yale locks for their old snaky locks,” Satan remarked after they had entered the inner hall. “But we must give them something to do,

since we are under contract to them, by Jove. They wanted to punish the unruly scholars, but there are very few naughty ones, I assure you, down here in our institution. One mention of the torrid zone, which is the lowest of all the circuses, makes them stand around to time. You know yourself that corporal punishment is out of date, and that moral persuasion is being used almost entirely in the modern schools. We believe in feminizing our students, so that they may become more tractable and more conscientious in their work—more eager to memorize in order to show off. Hell-o! here are our ancient spinners. Mr. Conklin, allow me to introduce you to the Parcae—Nona, Decuma, and Morta—good old Roman names.”

The three hags mumbled something over their toothless gums which Conklin could not catch.

“Never mind, sweet beauties,” Satan answered. “Go ahead and spin. You

must pardon them, my friend—it is not every day that they see a man like you.”

“I couldn’t hear what they said,” answered Conklin.

“All the better—you would only blush at it. But I think you had better take the plugs out of your ears while we are in this circus. In the other circuses where the healthy people dwell the noise is frightful, but here the poor wretches can scarcely make a sound. Let us stop in the office of the superintendent for a moment.”

They entered a large office, which was made bright and cheerful by means of sulphur flames. On the walls were many maps; on the window sills stood pots in which grew Deadly Night Shade; and in one corner lay a dog with three heads and four tails. At the desk sat the superintendent.

“Mr. Beelzebub, this is James Conklin, from the world. I am going to take him around through the Circus

Stultus. Are all the classes held right on time—on the very dot?”

“Yes, Sir, on the second. Each impteacher passes from one subject to another at the same second, without losing a fraction of time. We have ordered full speed ahead today, because the work is pressing so that otherwise we can never accomplish it all.”

“That is right, keep them at it. You see, Conklin, it would be bad to give the spirits time to think, because they might waste time in hatching up wicked things to do. You remember the old proverb about the idle hands, etc. Then they might become gossipy, too. It is best not to allow them time for reflection. Just pull down one of those Shades, will you please, Bub? This is the plant that makes our students open their eyes when they become too effete. See the brute in the corner? Nothing else than Trivium and Quadrivium stuffed and mounted. Looks natural, doesn't he? Died long ago. Dangerous

animal once—son of Cerberus. Come on, Conklin.”

“Who comes to this circus?” the latter asked.

“The cruel teasers and all who have made a failure out of life on account of folly. It is for that reason that we call it the Silly Circus. We try to teach them something worth while here, so that in the future they may know how to act more wisely. Our training is extremely scientific. We start them at the Kindergarten, and then slide them down through the various grades, which are, *ex ordine*:—Prime-Mary; Gran'-ma; High-Stool; Prop-school, also called Secondary Pap-school; Collar-age; Universal Tie; and Semi-Nursery, or Hot-bed for Pseudo-Religious Seedlings. Their brains fortunately become so soft by the time they get to the Collar-age that they are then quite easy to handle as we wish.

“Here we are at last in the Kindergarten. Wonderful system! Planned

by myself! See those boys with pitchforks going around the room? They are the ushers and the prodders, part of the generation transformed at the beginning of the world into Shedim, and as aides they are invaluable. We use the Lilin as teachers throughout the school, of whom Gog—that big spirit-devil with goggles on his nose—is the master of this ward; Ma-gog, his wife, is his assistant—see her yonder, with specs, too? Some of these goaders are the little Goggles. There is nothing like keeping the kids busy, is there?”

For some time they stood and watched the fresh souls broken into the traces of school life in Hell. Seated at tiny desks, all in mighty rows, the wretched spirits kept their eyes glued on their teacher, who just now was teaching them orthography and pronunciation at once. Their hands were folded and placed exactly upon the central edge of the desk.

Gog calls out in an awful voice: “C—A—T!!” And then the whole mass

squeaks out in answer, with thin, piping accents: "C—A—T—Cat!" Nine times the process is repeated, and then the imps swing their whips about the faces and necks of the miserable scholars, that dare not shrink from the blows, from fear of being sent to the lowest circle, but repeat the letters and word faster and faster and with more effort, all in unison. If one by chance fails to cry in exact time with the rest, the scourge falls in rapid tempo about his or her sensitized temples and cheeks until the fault is repaired. It is a gruesome sight, and it almost frightens Conklin.

"Don't be nervous, my dear friend," said Satan, who noticed his perturbation. "This is mere child's play compared with our other classes. Do you but listen now—this is interesting."

Gog was lengthening his phrase. "Cat-o'-nine-tails!" he spelled out, and all repeated it after him with the usual accompaniment of blows, which seemed

to have a life and eagerness of their own.

"Those scourges are cat-o-nine-tails," said the Devil, "which the imps wield. It is thus that we exemplify our own methods, so that in case any of the human souls wish to become imps themselves and teach in their turn they would know how to proceed with their task. Each knot represents a special stage in all schooling. The first is Imitation, which is not merely the prime incentive but also the major end; Memory, without which we could not see whether our methods were being effective, and Recitation tied together in one knot; Knowledge, the store of antiquities; Vanity, the chief attendant of the student; Superficiality, a valuable veneer with which to cover sores and pimples; Tests, which arouse both fear and injustice; Grades, the great levelers; Examinations, the rickety stepladder of advancement; and finally Prizes, the pasty gems of scholasticism.

When put together, the nine knots are called classes—whips all ready for use. We love them, because they are so effective. Hear them? Ha ha!"

"You have a great organization, Devil."

"Don't we, though? Let me show you how well drilled they are."

Satan made a motion to Gog, who immediately ceased shouting. Then he snapped his fingers, and lo! they all rose as a man; he snapped his tail, and they subsided together like so much machinery. "Great work, boys and girls!" he shouted hilariously like a child tickled with a toy. "Now I want two or three of you to come forward and speak to our friend, who has come way from the upper world to see you here. You ought to feel highly complimented and do your work twice as fast when he is gone, so that if he should visit you again some time you could make a jim-dandy showing. Willie! Tommy! Jennie!"

Behold thousands of the wretched

spirits rose from their seats and started to come forward.

"O Gosh!" cried out Satan in amazement. "I want only one of you. Come here, you little puny ghost near the corner, and the rest of you go ahead with your studies, and try to do 'two days' work in one. Who are you?"

"I am Tommie!" squeaked the shade, shaking in all his loosened joints from terror.

"What else are you?"

"I am a fool!"

"I should say that you were, and I am glad that you recognize it, for it is the first step toward wisdom. Why did you come here?"

"Because I used to play cards with the boys and drink champagne with the girls!"

"I should say you did! You had better read some of Ben-Cyrac's books when you get time. Now go back to your seat and behave yourself!"

The spirit returned to his place shak-

ing as if he had the ague, and soon he was reciting his lessons with the rest.

"He does not seem to have any originality!" exclaimed Conklin in surprise.

"Of course he doesn't. What do you think the modern method tries to do—create idiots for the lunatic asylums? I am afraid that you have not acquired the great principles of modern educators. What we are all after at present is to make a child a good social unit—fit him in, like a pebble on the beach; when he has original corners that cause him to be a little different from the rest, we have to smooth him off rather roughly. Individualism can not—must not exist—in the society of tomorrow."

"Ah, yes! Then that modern Italian method of Kindergarter training—is it not recognized as being a splendid system?"

"Yes, although that kills individualism as high as the garter, and no more. It fits right in with our ideals, never fear. I helped invent the system one

day when I was in Rome. The beauty of it is that the child is always in a *class*, and can not get away from it. Did you ever see a rain-storm?"

"Of course—I have watched hundreds of them."

"Were you ever able to tell one drop from another? No? And yet each one fell just as it pleased, did it not? Ha ha! Didn't I tell you? It's time to be going now, Mr. Conklin, to the next room. Should you like to visit the Gran'ma department, or skip to the High-Stool?"

"If you have no objections, I would rather skip to the High-Stool. Is there anything of especial interest to be seen in the Gran'ma department?"

"Oh it is very similar to the Kindergarten, except that they begin a great variety of subjects—thousands of them. We are increasing the number of studies every day, since we find that they can contain in their hollow brains all that

we desire to shove in. Variety is the spice of life, you know. Let's skip."

So together they left the initiatory place of torture, arm in arm like old-time friends; and before long they reached their destination. There seemed to Conklin to be unusual excitement in the air.

"Nothing extraordinary," Satan answered to his questions. "There is always an air of excitement about the place. The scholars are just coming to the point where they appreciate knowledge as an absolute science, as an end in itself, and naturally they are enthusiastic about it; it makes our work easier. Then again, they know that what they do here is commanded from above—I mean from the Collar-ages, to be sure; and besides is closely related to the accomplishments of the Pap-schools, which they are all fond of. *Nihil nisi de Collar-age* is their motto. Too, many of them are looking ahead to the time when they may wear the Universal-ties,

and thus bear a still more striking resemblance to each other, not only in face and manner and language, but in dress. *Alike, we like* is their slogan."

James Conklin was a bit surprised to discover how similar the great High-Stool was to the Kindergarter. Nevertheless, there was this great difference: the imps swung their knouts with more violence and cruelty; and, furthermore, some of the pupils, instead of reciting their lessons aloud at the top of their poor, thin voices, were writing with great rapidity. Sheda, the master, dexterously waved his wand of authority, thus commanding a chorus of open throats, which, although they did their best, uttered but a plaintive cry. Even the sudden appearance of Satan with his living comrade did not interrupt them for a single second, but their knees trembled under the desks, and the hands of the writers shook so violently that scrawls instead of letters were fashioned upon the inscription sheets.

Then Satan made his signs to Sheda and to the students, who stopped short, rose and sat together. It was a wonderful manifestation of superior discipline.

James Conklin seemed to be strangely affected by the marvelous spectacle. He clasped his temples with his hands and uttered a loud cry of distress.

"What is the matter with you, my dear fellow?" cried the Devil in much alarm. "If anything should happen to you down here I would never forgive myself!"

Amid the curious gaze from thousands and thousands of eyes, Conklin turned slowly to the Devil, allowed his arms to fall to his side, and said in a hoarse whisper:

"A thought just came to me! It is not on account of man's education that he is imitative and superficial—it is because he is imitative and superficial that he has such an education!"

The numberless eyes became sad. Sheda bit his lip. Satan shook his head

and laughed. "Is that all you have, Conklin? I could have told you that hundreds of years ago. Did you never travel in the forests of Brazil? or watch the monkeys at the zoo? Poor man! Will you have some more lozenges? Are you cold? Forget your thoughts, man, and be cheerful—join the recitation—swear—anything! Let us be entertained, Sheda! Have you any brilliant scholars?"

"Thousands of them, sir," replied the worthy pedagogue unhesitatingly. "Addie, come forward and tell our honorable guests what you know. The rest of you go on with your work—we have still five thousand pages to cover before night."

The spirit called Addie approached bashfully the king of corrections, and gave a pretty courtesy. Evidently she had been no chicken upon the earth, for she was no longer a girl.

"Who are you, anyway?" demanded Satan in a rough voice.

"I—I don't—know, sir," she stammered.

"Except that you are Addie. Well, that is enough. What are you here for?"

"To study, sir."

"To be sure; and I hope you do it well. I meant rather, for what reason were you sent here? Naturally you are a nonentity in this—hem—ha—hm—devilish brigade. Try to put yourself back on earth where you were something, at least a nonsentity."

"Ah! yes, now I remember: I dwelt in the outskirts of Ne Ork; my name was Mrs. Flyahy; I was a rich woman; I used to play Bridge-Whist for coin."

"Exactly. Oh, I know you well, Addie. More than one piteous wretch you tempted into infernity. You were a lewd prude; a pickled prune; stewed most of the time. Now go ahead and tell us what you have learned down here."

"Gosh, Mr. Satan, that would take forever!"

"Well, begin."

"Abcdefghi— 2×2 are 4, 2×3 are 6, 2×4 are 8— $a + b = x$ —pronouns have inflections of gender to designate—vapor is condensed by the cooling of the—the angle of refraction is equal to—hugging your opponent is a foul—one foul thrown into the basket counts one— CH_3
 $\text{CO}_2 \text{ C}_2 \text{ H}_5 + \text{H}_2 \text{ O} = \text{C}_2 \text{ H}_5 \text{ O H} + \text{CH}_3$
 $\text{CO}_2 \text{ H}$ —add one teaspoon soda, one half teaspoon cream o' tartar and—altruism is the action of human sympathy upon the cold stones—Tennyson scribbled the Princess—the quality of mercy is not strained but—ich bin, du bist, er ist—ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten dass ich so traurig coalbin—oui, oui, monsieur, je suis tres heureuse de vous voir, mais vous etes un vrai diable—George Washington was born the—the Presidents were—the boy stood on the burning deck—tra la la yod'el!!—"

"Stop, for grandma's sake, stop, Addie! Did they teach you all that here?"

"Yes, sir."

“Very good. That’s excellent. Now go back to your seat and do your work like a good girl. Trot! It must have been a severe task for her, Mr. Conklin, and I almost pity her. You know, she used to be so stout—perhaps you saw the shadow of her form? And fat people find it very hard to memorize, you know. But patience and obedience will accomplish miracles. Don’t you think that the future generations will be very bright? I think so, if what Addie recited to us so nicely is indicative of the general preparation. And her manners were so good, too! But they may have been a relic of her past life, of course. We are planning great things, great things, Mr. Conklin. Would you care to go next to the Collar-age?”

Conklin shook his head sadly.

“No? Why, my dear man, you do not appear to be very enthusiastic. Are you not well? Would you like another lozenge? Another coat of asbestos paint? I guess Addie surprised you

some, ha ha! That's it, Mr. Conklin. You'll be all right before long—you'll forget her, and then there will be some one else, and so on. I don't blame you—she *was* a fine-looking girl. Well, to tell the truth, you would find the Collar-age and the Universal-tie more or less of a continuation of this; and in the Seedling Home for Nurselings they do mostly reading which might not interest you very much. We'll cross over to the Experimental Station, where our psychologists look over the brains of those who are affected deleteriously by our training, or who came to us in bad condition, mostly the latter—hm! This way, please."

Satan took his friend's arm in order to give him a little support and to cheer him up. They went upstairs by means of a moving escalator and into a large room shaped liked a clinics' hospital. Hundreds and thousands of shades sat around the central platform in an amphitheater. At the bottom the experi-

ments were made on subjects chosen by lot from the group, while all the rest watched in the hope of learning something, for Satan allowed no one to be idle or to do anything by themselves. They approached the clinic.

Several shades, who were the experimenters themselves, with enormous heads and squinting, shifty eyes, were cutting and probing the heads of their subjects by means of various strange instruments.

"Whing he la tum tum nut ty bdllyfph grrrumnia pathka bing!" one of them, who seemed to be the chief operator, shouted excitedly.

"Did you hear that?" cried Satan. "He is on the eve of a wonderful discovery! He says that he has found by measuring the forward antennas of the second cell of the occipital lobe that the angle computed two weeks ago was wrong. Soon they will have discovered the laws and movements of human

nature!" and he rubbed his hands with glee.

"Why is it that everything looks so much out of proportion here, so very large?" James Conklin asked.

"It is because in order to see better and to make a better showing they have greatly magnified this science and its subjects. Oh, they know how to do it—they are shrewd men."

"I feel dizzy, Mr. Satan," said Conklin.

"Do you really? I am afraid that our wonderful learning has been too much for you. But you must not try to absorb it all at once, my dear man. Some people, with very large back-heads too, have studied for years and years without exhausting all the material offered them. So do not be discouraged. Shall we go?"

"Just as you say," answered Conklin.

When they had arrived again at the pretty park, Satan pointed out a bench underneath a tree.

“I am going to let you have a little rest before adventuring into the next circle. Lie down on the bench and sleep. There are no policemen here, so don't worry about your sole—no body will trouble it. I am going down to see my Cleopatra. Ta ta!”

CHAPTER IV

CIRCUS GLACIALIS

"HELL-O!" cried Satan, who had returned, depositing a huge bundle on the bench where he had left Conklin. "Hell—o—o! Where in—hell—o—o! Where are you, James Conklin?"

"Over this way, Devil, behind the trees! Come quick!" he heard shouted from a throat that still retained some huskiness of earthly life. "Come quick!"

Satan hurried through the bushes. He wondered what could have happened to his visitor, for whose soul he was now responsible, and he trembled from head to foot.

"I got you that time! Keep quiet, won't you?" came to his ears. "This way, Devil!"

When Satan cleared the last bush with his cloven leaps, he saw Conklin

leaning over two prostrate spirits, which he was holding down by means of a pitchfork stuck in the ground so as to enclose them and bind them tightly. They were struggling hard in vain efforts to get away from their captor; but when they caught sight of Satan, they desisted, and lay still as in death.

"What in the deuce have you got here, my friend?" demanded Satan with an amused smile. "Been hunting?"

Conklin stood up, but he clung to the fork. His face was very red. "I'm glad you came, Devil," he said, wiping the perspiration from his brow. "I was having an awful time trying to hold them. You see, I lay down on the bench and had a nice little nap after you went away. When I woke up, I started out to reconnoiter a bit around the park, because everything looked so fresh and beautiful. I was having a bully time feeding nuts to the squirrels, when suddenly I ran across this spirit here"—pointing to his captives—"leaning up

against a tree with something in his hand. As soon as he sees me he jumps up and aims the thing at me. I was afraid, and I hollered and ran. I must have started up this little imp"—with another gesture toward the pile—"because he came sneaking around the corner with this pitchfork in his hand, and when he saw the spirit he made a bee line for him and began to maul him terribly. That was more than I could stand, so I sailed in and caught them both. There they are—who are they?"

Satan laughed and laughed until he doubled over; and still he laughed. "P-p-pard-on m-me!" he exclaimed at last. "It is so funny! You have caught both the truant and the truant-officer!" And he laughed again.

Conklin smiled sheepishly and let go the fork. "Do you mean that this spirit has run away from school?" he asked.

"Exactly, sir. He probably escaped from the building and was reading a book in the shade. There it is now by

the tree-trunk. Pick it up and let's see what it is."

Conklin picked it up gingerly. "By jingo, it was not a gun after all!" he exclaimed, turning red from embarrassment. "'The Psychology of Religious Experience,' by Ames—of all things!"

"That's harmless, although it does look dangerous," said Satan. "Take the pitchfork away, and let us see whom we have here, if you please, Brother."

The latter did as he was requested; and the two spirits, one human and the other demon, after kicking convulsively two or three times, rose to their feet.

"Go home to your father, Beelzie," the archfiend commanded, "and tell him to give you ten credits and a stick of arsenic to suck. You are a good boy. You will pardon Mr. Conklin, because he is a visitor of honor, and besides he didn't know what was up. Run! Now, who are you, my man?" turning angrily to the other.

"My *nom*, eet ees Tommee Hunterr!"

answered the ghost very decisively, with a strong French accent.

"Come out of it!" shouted Satan. "Don't you know who I am? Don't you know me well enough by this time, old plutocrat, to know that I know who you are? I knew you before you came down here even. For a long time I had my eyes on you. Next day you play hookie, I'll send you down to the *Cercle d'Horreurs*, Jean Calvin!"

Conklin stared. In spite of his remarkable self-control, his eyes actually stuck out of his head.

The spirit, which had at first made an attempt to conceal his features with his arm, not realizing that he was now but a shadow of his real self, burst into sobs, and rubbed his dry eyes with his hollow fists. "I'll be good!" he blurted out hysterically, falling upon his knees before the master of corrections.

"You had better plead for mercy, old hypocritical teaser," Satan said harshly. "To tell the truth, I don't like to grant

it to you, because you showed so little when you were the cock of the walk in Geneva and murdered your friends; but for the sake of example, this time I will. Stand up and behave like a man. Now tell us how you got out, and where you found this trash."

Jean twitched his great nose nervously several times, and then cleared his throat for his story.

"You see, Satan, Sir, that I found it very monotonous in the psychology class. I could hardly understand what the experimenters were driving at. My own systems are easier, Sir. Finally they got hold of me in spite of my remonstrances, Sir, and analysed my head. They argued and poked about for a horribly long time, and the pain they gave me was excruciating. They claimed that I was suffering from an abnormal disease which they styled Semicosis of the Functional Apparatus of the Subliminal Self. When they finished with me at last and sent me to my

seat, Sir, I took an opportunity to seize this book, which one of the professors reads in order to clarify his thoughts, and slip out through the door while they were quarrelling about somebody's facial angle. As it happened the fates were spinning yarns so fast that they didn't see my shadow as I went by them; and the furies were pulling each other's hair. And then—"

"I know, I know, Jean. You sat down in the shade of the old apple-tree reading that shady book. It's a bad business for a shade of your ecclesiastical connections. I am mighty glad that Mr. Conklin caught you, but I am sorry he saved you from a severe whipping. Next time, as I intimated, it will be different. Go back to your room, and take back that novel to its owner. By the way, how far did you get?"

"Only as far as the curses on page 145, sir."

"That is plenty far enough. Don't forget my words. Go. I hope you won't

think that this is an example of our regular school discipline, Mr. Conklin," Satan, when Calvin was out of sight, continued, nursing his lips with his tail. "It doesn't happen in a dog's age. However, I know that you have some common-sense and do not judge by appearances only. What do you think of our truant?"

"I'd rather not tell you, Mr. Angel. How did he happen to be in the school? He did not ruin his life by folly, did he?"

"No. He is a regular attendant of the upper department of our institution, the Circus Maximus, which you have already seen. He was a hypocrite. The experimenters asked for him, because they wished to measure the smallness of his mind and the magnitude of his Ego. Famous characters like him are in great demand, don't you know, because when their names are attached to statements everybody accepts them without a question. He founded a theological club

upstairs, which I allow to hold meetings just before some important event is pulled off: it arouses them to battle. Jean is the president, of course, and I myself am the *vice*-president. Some of our alienists have expressed the opinion that he is unbalanced mentally, probably because of the size of his nose, which pulls him forward. However, I am better acquainted with him than they, in spite of their examinations. I know well what ails him: a disease which usually has a congenital origin, *Ego Maximus*; '*Ego major*, some call it, but his is bigger than that. If he does not improve, we'll cast him down. Are you ready to go?"

"Just as you say, doctor."

"Here are a couple of fur coats that Cleopatra sent to you with her compliments: she never uses them. You will need them all right in the next circle. Here are some skates besides. You skate, do you not?"

"Surely. But isn't it a bit dangerous skating with you, Satan?"

"Not at all. You are an honored guest, and you are just as safe in Hell as at home with your wife. Pardon me for keeping five of these coats myself—somehow I always feel cold, except when I am with Cleo. That's right, ring five times. Lucky again! The old boy happened to be right here. Step in—lively, please!"

Charon banged the door and opened wide the throttle. The car dropped like a comet. Conklin's stomach shot up against his throat and stuck there. "God!" he muttered to himself as he sank weakly upon the plush seat, "I thought for the moment I was in Ne Ork!"

"Shall I rub your solar plexus, sir?" asked Charron with a grin.

"Mind your business!" cried Satan. "Who gave you leave to speak? Do you think you can take liberties with me simply because I am pleasant to you once in a while? I like not your portal

vein of humor. I reckon we'll have to find a place in the Circus Horribilimus for you."

The pallor departed from Charon's cheeks, leaving them like withered apples bitten by the frost. He turned to his lever, on which he leaned for support in place of his shaking knees; nor did he venture another word.

They came finally to a beautiful stop at the third floor; and Charon opened the 'elevator door with a profound salaam. An icy chillness pervaded the atmosphere, making the inspectors shiver and shake, especially Satan, who trembled violently in spite of the half-dozen heavy furcoats and high cap which he had put on during the descent. Nevertheless, he assumed a cheerful countenance, as was his wont even when in difficulties, and remarked to his human companion that they would warm up quickly on the ice.

"Let me attach your skates for you,"

said the Devil with chattering teeth, stooping to honor James.

"No thanks!" the latter answered curtly. "I prefer not to have you tampering with my sole. Do you put on your own, and I'll adjust mine myself. You might tell me what we are to see here, and who are committed to this frigid region, and why."

The chief made answer thus: "The Circus Glacialis is considered by some, among whom are the inhabitants themselves, to be the most severe place of punishment of all. However that may be—I myself know that there are other much more terrible tortures, it is not so much for the punishment, which is being recognized more and more by civilized people as a mere relic of barbarism, as it is for the antiseptic properties of the ice that they are relegated hither, and of course as a warning and example to other beings. Punishment has no value except as a preventative, and vengeance simply as a means of personal satisfac-

tion is now obsolete. But come, let us hasten to get exercise, else I shall perish from the cold. I will talk better as I become warm."

They were on the edge of a wide bay. Behind them towered the 'elevator wall, dark and gloomy. Before them the outlook was even more melancholy, because of a lowering haze that hung over the vast expanse of black ice. No spirits were in sight—nothing but bleakness.

Arm in arm the two skaters circled the bay, according to Satan's directions. At the end of an hour the Demon, having forced his venous blood into circulation, laughed off his last spasm of ague and resumed his narration.

"This little inlet is my own private preserve. Once in a great while I come here to reflect on the ice when things are going wrong, or to cut a few fancy figures when everything is bright and gay. I should not have minded the cold so much had I not stayed so long with Cleopatra; but I am feeling better now.

“There are no souls here, as you can see. I would not have them anywhere near the 'elevator for fear of contamination; but out in the great lake they are thick enough, too numerous, indeed. Most of them are imbedded in the ice anywhere from five to five thousand feet down, although a few are left with their heads emerging. *Hell-divers* is the name Charon invented for these poor devils. He hates like Hell to bring them down, and I don't blame him. He kicked on the first load, and I had to threaten him with the lowest circle before he would get in the 'elevator with them. He has pleaded with me to freeze them up in cakes of ice before bringing them down, and I don't know but what that is an excellent idea.

“Here come those spirits that wittingly transmitted venereal diseases to other people, whether to strangers, friends, Mammon-companions, servants, wives, husbands, or children. Those who with knowledge of their conditon contami-

nated offspring are sensitized a hundred-fold before receiving their icy entombment, and grippe-germs are pumped into their throats. Adulterers come here too—those that caused injury to others, whether by tempting maliciously some one to be a paramour, or by arousing jealousy, or by breaking up the purity and harmony of a family, or by blackening a reputation which otherwise might have remained clean, or by lowering another's moral sense and social ideals. To these we give a sensibility fifty times that of an ordinary living person suffering from the Grippe, before immersing them.

“Still other spirits find their way hither: the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah together with all their imitators; male spirits who seduced young girls and brought ruin on their heads; females who helped to injure the reputation of stumbling members of their own sex, pushing them down with gossip; females who tried to seduce ministers

and young men of good morals; shameless fornicators who knew better; and the whole tribe of grossly immoral men and women who clung to vice through their own choice. They all are sensitized.

"If any are so saturated with vice that even the ice will not suffice to purify them, or if they have committed horrible crimes in addition to their carnal self-indulgence, they are cast at once without mercy into the Circus Horribilimus; and, if there they still persist in being shameless, they may never be heard of more."

By this time Satan and James Conklin were skating with long strokes out into the great lake of purification. On every side hovered the hellish gray mist, which prevented them from seeing far ahead—Conklin, at least.

"Are we in no danger of running into something?" he asked.

"Nothing that can hurt *you*," answered Satan, who now carried his companion

along at high speed, curving majestically now to the left now to the right. "As it sometimes happens, a head sticks up out of the ice here and there; and, if we hit it, our skates cut right through. The only danger is that some of these spirits, who have had time to themselves for reflection, may have something heavy on their minds, which are otherwise hollow, and so we might possibly get a bad fall. That is why our skates are fashioned with such large, high curls in front, and we go so fast. A man's mind can not withstand such great speed, you know. Of course it hurts the souls horribly whenever they do get hit, but such is their fate. I hope that today we hit no—"

He was interrupted by a sudden jar, which shook his frame and was transmitted to Conklin through his arm. Then Conklin himself stumbled, and would have fallen had not Satan held him up with a firm grip.

"Hold on!" cried the Unholy one.

"That was a terrific blow. Somebody got it in the neck! Wonder who it was? Two of them, too, right near together. Let's turn and go back."

They swung around to the right under Satan's guidance, and soon they arrived at the scene of the accident. They heard groans, dreadful groans, issuing apparently at first, from the ice itself.

"What do you mean by attempting to stop us on our journey?" the Wicked Skater cried in an angry voice. "Who are you, anyway?"

Conklin took out his ear-plugs in order to hear everything that might be said. For a while moans of pain and the chattering of teeth was all he heard, but soon a faint voice began to speak, and then he distinguished the head of a soul, whose black hair and black beard afforded no contrast to the black ice. Its nose was like a beak, long and cruel; and its face, which had been distorted by years of vice, writhed and twisted from pain.

"I am the shade of the wicked Gibeon," the panting voice said, "Gibeon of Gibeah. My comrade, who is fastened in the ice just within sight, is Benbenjah, my cousin. We lived lives of evil. One day a stranger, a certain Levite who sojourned on the top of mount Ephim, came to Gibeah and obtained lodging for the night at the home of an old man. We and other Gibeah-nites injured the stranger and his concubine, leaving her dead at his door. Oh-o-o-o-o-h!"

Satan shuddered and dragged Conklin away rudely. "Let's get out of this quick!" he said, "this is too much for me."

For some time neither of them spoke. "Why don't you send those wretches down to the Horrible Hole and be done with them, Satan?" demanded Conklin with an effort, his voice hoarse and husky.

"You don't understand," responded the Prince of Darkness gently. "They

did not have the light that we have now." After a long pause he continued, wishing to turn Conklin's mind into other channels of thought:

"Do you see the skate-marks all over the ice here? Those were made by ourimps whose business it is to inspect the ice and its victims, and to attend to the ammonia evaporators, which need much care because they are so large. Mammon, who is especially interested in Ne Ork Sity, wanted me to have them manufactured there, on account of its being the most populous area for its size in the land; but I was afraid that the tremendous amount of corruption there might affect the parts of the evaporators and make them quickly rot; Beliar asked to have them ordered from Karl Snobs of Beslehems, probably because of a personal interest, although Beliar said 'because he makes his men work like hell'; but I objected to the religious connotations of the name, and therefore

I got them from Bittspurg, the city of holy smoke.

"I heard a good story about Bittspurg one day, Mr. Conklin. I went to Filly D'el-fear in the summer to visit a certain lady. I found her engaged in a conversation with a friend from Bittspurg. It was awfully hot there, and I don't blame the Filly D'el-fear lady for saying what she did. She said, 'Isn't it just hot as Hell, yet!' Then they both laughed, and the Filly D'el-fear lady sort of apologized for her language, saying that her friend probably didn't know anything about that place. Of course I chuckled to myself, because I knew them both well! But I kept as still as a mouse; and I heard the visitor say: 'My stars and garters! Surely I know all about it—why, I live there!' 'Live there?' the fat Filly D'el-fearian asked rather surprised. '*Was meinst du, py donders?*' 'Yes, indeedee,' the visitor said, 'I live in Bittspurg!' You

should have seen the expression on the fat lady's face!

"As I was saying, the imps cut around here pretty lively sometimes, but I am glad to see them enjoy themselves, for we keep them working hard most of the time. We have no labor unions here. You would be surprised by the way the little devils can go without coats and still not seem to mind the cold! Just now they are at work on the evaporators at the other end of the pond, and as it is very far we shall not go way over there unless you are particularly desirous of examining the apparatus."

"No," Conklin answered, "I am not a boiler maker or an ice-cream freezer, and there are other things in which I am more interested—the human soul, for example. I can see plenty of machinery on the top of the earth, and altogether too much, sometimes."

"Should you care to have me dig out a poor ghost from his icy shroud with our steam drill? There might be an-

other carnisensual of whom you have heard and would like to see."

"No," said Conklin again, with a decisive shake of his head. "I have beheld already a great sufficiency. Take me away."

Satan smiled to himself, and turned about after a long sweep. They took off their skates at the edge of the bay and examined the blades carefully.

"Hell-o!" said Old Harry with a whistle. "A large nick in mine and another in yours. Phew! I thought those fellows had something heavy on their minds. It must have torn them up some. Well, it doesn't pay to interfere with the old Nick!"

CHAPTER V

CIRCUS PLUVIALIS

IT was not long before they were in the 'elevator, going down once more. Conklin came nearer fainting this trip than the last, because of both the speed, which seemed even more terrible than before, and the heat, which brought out the perspiration from every pore.

"Poor fellow!" said Satan, leaning over him anxiously. Conklin thought it strange that the Devil should have so much sympathy, and asked him point-blank how it happened.

"Shoot!" the latter exclaimed. Charon, who had started to snooze over his lever, upon hearing his master's exclamation started to turn on the triple-expansion, and he might have succeeded in snuffing out Conklin's life like a candle-light had not Satan perceived

his motion and caught him quickly by the arm, and warned him in a kindly manner to go gently. "It was but a vocal gesture interpreting my individual reaction to Brother Conklin's inquisitive interrogation," he said to Charon. "Yes, James, that is the way I feel when anyone begins to talk about sympathy. Surely some men exist who have that blessed quality, but they are few and far between; and the funniest thing is that, although a woman manufactured under the usual recipe generally has a thousand times as much sympathy to spend on a nice-looking, vigorous man than man himself, nevertheless when it comes to *woman* she is ready to cut and slash like a butcher his meat. Possibly the sex principle working inside of them turns sour and drives them, both man and woman, to be nasty to their rival brothers and sisters. I am an optimist, however, Brother Conklin, and I hope for the best in the future."

"Fourth floor, going down!" Charon cried.

“No hurry, old buoy. We’ll take our time today if never again. I remarked, sir, that in the future men may learn to see what is good for them. As things are now, I prefer to dwell in Hell. I’ve often been in a so-called Christian Theological Cemetery that seemed like an ice-box through the cold corridors of which frozen meat walked up and down. Never mind—lots of places in the world are not so bad as they appear, and a few even have a little sunshine; and if you don’t enjoy one place, try another. Legs were intended for locomotion. Tramps have the right idea, only that they lean too far from the social bias. However, can you blame them? They know that the city is a bad place for family life, that the petticoats of a city are filled with empty superficialities, and that the country is agreeable only when it is kept moving. Every time I walk along a residential street I think I see myself grinning at me from the windows. I prefer the Great White

Way, where everything is open and above board."

"Last call!" shouted Charon, who had become imp-atient—there were so many souls waiting at the top to be brought down.

"I trust you get my point," Satan said to Conklin. "Put on your wraps, for you'll find them necessary; and take that umbrella Charon put in the corner for you. I would have brought rubber-boots, but their soles would not last long. If you get wet, you'll have a chance to dry out in one of the lower circles." While talking he himself resumed the five or six coats which he had thrown aside in the 'elevator, and took an umbrella for his own use. "If there's anything I object to it's getting wet."

Already they could hear the rain falling. "Where does it all come from?" Conklin asked.

"From the story above. The ice melts pretty rapidly, and we let the liquid drop through little holes in the ceiling,

which is miles farther up than you can see."

"Hail!"

"No, nothing but ice-water, though it drops like hail, to tell the truth."

"How did Charon know enough to bring the umbrellas, Satan? They were not in the 'elevator before."

"I sent him a message by wireless telepathy, which is a very convenient mode of transcommunication. By means of it I keep in touch with thousands of up-to-date persons on the earth who otherwise would find it difficult to get me. For example, the other day a woman telephammed me a night-message—'Shall I go or not?' She could have sent a longer message at the same rate, but for the very eloquence of her laconic style I admired her—I am sick of talking to women, and I hate to have business relations with them as a usual thing. So I telepathed back—'Go.' I'll be looking for her soul before long.

What are you laughing at, Mr. Conklin?"

"Ha! ha! they are so funny—those souls hopping around in the grass—ha! ha!"

"You would not laugh if you were in their place, my dear man. They are in agony. The chilling rain beats down upon them and racks their nervous system from end to end, for, being but shades, their hollow hide is no protection to them. They leap and hop in frantic endeavor to escape from one bucketful, only to run head first into another. Nevertheless, they receive this blessing from it: the wicked thoughts are beaten out of their heads as fast as they come, until finally, after many years—hundreds, yea, even thousands, the *good thoughts* have a chance to grow, since the water cannot hurt *them*."

"Who come to this rainy region, and why?"

"Souls that threw cold water on others when they were alive, or wished them

bad luck. Now they receive fine opportunities for tasting their own bitter medicine. It is amusing to watch them hop and skip, Conklin, although I become vexed for the moment whenever anybody else makes fun of them for their antics. Let us summon one of them hither and question him."

No sooner had he spoken the words than a little, weazened, razor-faced spirit turned around and hastened up to them. He presented a pitiable spectacle as he shivered and shook from the cold.

"Who in hell are you?" demanded Satan gruffly.

"I-I am-m-m-m on-n-n-ne in-n-n-n th-th-thousan-nd-ds-s-s," the wretched devil tried to say through the shades of his chattering teeth. "Wh-wh-wh-e-en-n-n-nnn I-I-I cc-c-c-aa-a-a-a-mmm-m-m-me here, y-y-ou-u ttt-t-too-oo-kkk-kk-kkk-k aww-wway mm-m-my nn-n-na-a-m-mm-me!"

"I should think I did," replied the

Devil grimly. "Do you suppose for an instant that I would let such a miserable specimen of humanity as you are have any personality down here with us?"

"Nn-n-n-n-nn-o-o-o-o, ssssir."

"You have learned some sense since you arrived, at least. How do you like it here, my man?"

"I-i-i-ttt is-s-s-s ccc-cc-ccc-o-ol-l-l-l-d-d-dd as-s-s-s h-hel-l!"

"Now, you're talking," said Satan, rubbing his hands together with what seemed to Conklin very much like glee.

"You're a college man, are you not?"

"Y-y-y-e-s-s-sss sss-s-s-i-rrr-r. I-I-I am-m-m-mmm a-a-a D-d-d-d-d-d-d-d-"

"Never mind that. I don't give a continental which one—they are all alike; and I don't enjoy standing here in the cold rain talking to such as you, either. Hop along beside us as we walk over to Refrigerator Pool, and shiver if you have to, but for the land's sake tell us what you know in a hurry and be done with it. You threw cold water on

your class-mates who were earnest men and wanted to do something for themselves and the world in general, did you not?"

"Y-y-e-ss, D-d-d-d-d-d-d-d"

"Call me Satan."

"Y-y-e-ss, Ssss-s-s-a-a-tt-t-a-a-nnn-n-nn-n, a-n-n-d-ddd-d on-n-n evv-v-err-y-y-bbbb-bb-bodddd-d-dy-y el-l-l-ssssse!"

"Warm up and hold your tongue together for a minute. Go get some of your college mates and give us the y'ell we taught you."

The ghost shivered off through the icy shower and returned presently with quite a band of insignificant-looking ghosts. The first one drew them up proudly in a bunch, and then waved his arms three times. "One! two! three!" he shouted, forgetting to stammer in his excitement. "Learn from us! Learn from us! Learn from us!" they all hollered together, with squeaking spirit voices; but they did make quite a noise.

"That's good!" said Satan approv-

ingly. They all smiled through their shakes.

"Now let's have the one you brought with you." They hummed together in order to get the right pitch, and then they burst forth proudly:

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here. What in hail do we care? What in hail do we care? Hail, hail, the gang's all here. What in hail do we care now?"

"Magnificent!" exclaimed the Devil. "You are improving wonderfully. Now run over to the park and play. I wish you well in all your enterprises, provided they have a good purpose in view. Trot! By the way, Brother Conklin, do you know what is the greatest of all truisms? Why, altruism; we try to teach it to our little boys and girls. You ought to see what a change comes over them after a few years of care and attention. Between the whip and love we bring most of them around all right.

"Yonder lies the pool of which I made mention. The rain-fall on this

side of the divide runs into it; and beyond, far over the slope, another is formed, of exactly the same size and shape as this—a perfect circle in imitation of the Circus in which we are. It would never do to have too much natural design here, because nature is getting to be way out of date, and artifice is king—a regular royal baking-powder for the whole lump of life. Every Saturday night we drive the spirits into the ponds for a thorough cleansing; they get no rub down when they come out, so they run to keep from freezing; they don't seem to mind the rain much for a while after their ice-bath, but when the cold shower gets on their nerves again they are a sorry lot; and the benefit they receive is beyond measure: they'll never throw cold water again on earnest people, mark my words."

"How do you drive them to the pools? I see no imps about?"

"No imps are needed here, Mr. Con-

klin. At six o'clock Saturday evening we cause it to rain pitchforks, and they are glad enough to move poolward to escape from the piercing shower which commences at the edges. Yonder is my den; do you want to visit it?" He pointed to a hole in the hillside. They hastened toward it.

Suddenly a huge animal, which must have been asleep in the entrance, or perhaps dreaming brute day-dreams, darted out, barking horribly. "Charge, Cerberus, charge!" commanded Satan. The dog cowered at his feet and opened its three mouths with a plaintive whine; into them Satan cast quickly some charcoal tablets which happened to be in his pocket. The effect of them on the beast was magical: his limbs relaxed in slumber, and the heads fell forward onto the ground between the paws. "There will be a pause in his barking," Satan remarked, "and we can sit at our ease within."

Conklin stood at the entrance for a

while before going in. He wished to watch the poor shades that flitted past the den in every direction, beaten incessantly by the cruel rain. The hillside was covered with them. One miserable soul ran at the drops in fury, as if he could tame them by biting and snarling, just as a mad dog would leap frenzied, at an enemy; but the more he gave way to his wrath the more he became tormented, until, losing his strength through temper and violence, he fell prone upon the wet ground and rolled moaning down the slope into the pond; the icy water brought him again to his senses, and he crawled out upon the bank with his head hanging down like a whipped cur, and walked about dejectedly in the clear space which his companions, who either feared or hated him or both, left for him.

"If I were you I would not watch that soul very long," said the Corrector, "for madness is catching. Do you not recognize Alexander the great? It is he.

For over two thousand years he who conquered the world yet did not subdue his own passions has acted thus. He is just beginning to come to individual consciousness, as his melancholy moods indicate; soon perhaps he will have a social awakening, which can not exist without the other. Some remarkable cures have been made in this circle, Mr. Conklin. Many of our patients lose control of their tempers and try blindly to wrestle with the rain-drops; nor is it always amusing to see their terrible struggles; nevertheless, in time they realize their weakness as well as the futility of fighting against the elements, and then they become docile even to sociability. Leave your umbrella outside, please; it will be safe, since none of the shades can lift it."

They found the cave snug and cozy within. Electric lamps with soft, green glow hung from the ceiling; a comfortable couch decorated with an embroidered cover and silken cushions filled one

corner; across the room, which may have been thirty feet square, stood a beautiful oak book-case with glass doors; while in the center was a reading table, carved by hand, on which rested a drop light of the latest style; original paintings by the old masters hung upon the walls among the banners of many colleges; and on the floor were expensive oriental rugs, any one of which would have brought a fortune at a public sale: altogether the den possessed an artistic tone and an atmosphere of refinement and thought such as James Conklin had seldom experienced.

"Cleopatra helped me fit this out," said Satan. "Do you not think she has a good taste? I have found that women as a rule possess a far greater appreciation and knowledge of beauty than men. When I am tired of my executive labors, and weary of doctoring up degenerate spirits, I come here to enjoy life and to get my bearings. Just as a ship must often approach an uncharted coast with

lead and sounding line in order to ascertain the proper course, so I seek my den when cares weigh heavy upon me, that I may reflect upon the past and ponder over the future. I keep here the best books of all ages and tongues, although to tell the honest truth I seldom read. Good judgment, which is the only key to a sound and safe philosophy, is not attained by much book-reading."

"What is this shelf marked off into feet, inches and centimeters?" Conklin asked after examining the library.

"That is Mr. Helot's five-foot book-shelf," replied the Devil. "I measure it carefully once a month to be sure that it has not been altered by sudden changes in the temperature, because if it were shortened by even so much as a millimeter, Mr. Helot might turn uneasily in his bed, and be influenced to begin a religious controversy in the morning thro' ill humor: therefore I

am solicitous: pseudo-scientific minds must be measured with kid gloves."

"What a peculiar motto you have on the wall over the book-case!" Conklin remarked. "Did you intend it for the general public or for yourself? I presume you hung it there to keep the bats away."

"Read it aloud," responded Satan with a strange smile.

"It is printed in old English, and at first I could not decipher it. It runs as follows:

'My purposes were good, though not my style;

I meant to stir, not entertain. Carlyle.'

What is this on the other wall?

'It has been said that he who runs may read;

Quoth I, take heed thou dost not trip instead.'

You certainly delight in strange proverbs, Mr. Devil. I shall have to think them over more carefully when I get home. Ah!

*'A useful thing in any age is iron;
But I've had my day, so must pass out.*

Lord Byron.'

Is the last a bit of irony?"

"Just as you take it, Mr. Conklin. I force interpretations upon nobody."

"That last one seems to be done by hand. Did you draw it?"

"Byron did it, and signed it himself after a little coercion on my part; he was prepared for it, however. Should you not like to look at some more graphs? Many of them are autographs. I keep them in this album. Sit down in the morris chair and take it easy. I made them write the truth about themselves in these couplets."

"You do possess prizes, Prince. Listen to this!

*'Alive, I wrote but little decent verse—
I am Walt Whitman—most of it was
worse.'*

Worse than what, Satan?"

"What comes after it?"

"Nothing."

"Worse than nothing, of course. Did you ever blow off fire-crackers on the Fourth of July?"

"Yes, lots of them."

"Then you know what punk is?"

"Yes, it is a soft stick made out of camel's dung, intended to burn with bad odor. What's the connection?"

"The connection is made when you touch it, not before. That's enough for Whitman. What's the next couplet?"

"*'My mind was keen—I kept it tuned with spirits;*

At present I sing tunes with other spirits.'

This looks like *E. A. T.* scribbled after it. Who is *E. A. T.*?"

"He used to spell his name *E. A. Poe*; but when he descended to our *Circulus Stultus*, he felt ashamed when everyone asked for his name, on account of the connotations going with it; so I allowed him to change it."

"To?"

"Exactly, only with an *e* on the end

of it. I think *E. A. T.* much nicer than *D. R. I. N. K.*, do you not, Mr. Conklin?"

"Yes, but—"

"But what?"

"I always thought that Poe was a great writer. Why, the French people rate him very highly."

"The rates are pretty high in some parts of France, surely. Yes, he jingled well. Did you ever go on a sleigh-ride in the cool winter?"

"Of course I have, often. I enjoyed it, too. Why do you ask?"

"Then you are familiar with the sound of sleigh-bells?"

"Surely."

"So was Poe. He contrived some cute little tales too—Murders in the Rue Morgue, the Gold Bug, Fall of the House of Usher, etc. They will always tarry—unfortunately. Did you ever take opium? No? Then you can never fully appreciate the beauties of Poe's writings. I am told that between recita-

tions he murmurs sadly to himself: 'I could have done better!' Well?"

"*'Mark well my name, 'twas spread by foolish Rumor;*

"'MARK well my name, 'twas spread by foolish Rumor;

There is some catch to this couplet. I can not guess the writer's name."

"The first word gives it away. I gave them all away to Cleopatra and she read some of them and laughed a little at first, but soon I noticed that she had lost her appetite; so I ordered an arsenic tonic for her, and presented the books to the spirits who have to work the force-pumps. Read another one aloud."

"Here is an autograph which puzzles me sorely:

'Together we toiled up Parnassus' mount;

But, trying to met'er, lost the lyric fount.'

To whom might it refer?"

"Is there not another on the same page, below? Read that."

*"'Didst ever trip along a stony walk
And stumble when thy prose began to
talk?"*

That's funny—I don't get next. Here is still a third, which probably will reveal the person's identity:

*'Didst ever swim without a fear of
drowning,
Or bake a cake without a fear of
Brown—?"*

Ha ha! Now I catch on. How clever! But he didn't finish, Satan."

"No, my dear sir, any more than he finished anything. I have a great admiration, somehow, nevertheless, for the mighty nerve of such writers; nor am I the only one; there are some people who walk through literature with as much power of discrimination as peasants tramping down a paved street in *sabots* have delicacy of tread."

"Do you pose as a critic, Satan, beside all your other artistic accomplishments?" asked Conklin wonderingly.

"Only one pose has any value what-

ever," replied his majesty without deigning to answer the question, "and that is pur-pose. Without it a piece of writing is like a piece of rotten meat in a refrigerator. With only it, however, no work can be worthy of a place in high literature, because in addition there must be thought and beautiful expression and propriety. Who fails in part, fails in part; and who fails wholly, wholly fails. That's right, lay down the album, and turn off the light. I want to tell you about the spirits of this region, seeing that they are the primary objects of our study.

"You would be surprised to know how various are the motives which have actuated these selfish and pessimistic ghosts in their cold water casting. The majority did it out of jealousy, with green-eyed egotism; some, out of malice; some, out of cruelty; some, out of narrowness of mind; some, out of a spirit of revenge:—none of them evinced the

sympathy for others which ought to be first in a man's thoughts.

"Here is a special case: a young man leaves the business in which he has been prospering in order that he may satisfy his highest aspirations by going into the ministry and eventually touching with healing fingers the needs of humanity; but his relations, who have mercenary minds, give him an icy douche: they, being in the habit of criticizing everything that is not like theirs, look at his step from their own point of view and imagine that he is seeking a life of comparative ease, and furthermore fear that he, instead of bringing money to them and their children, will be a burden; so they, to whom money and show are paramount, cluck at the young man. Of course when he succeeds, they pat him on the back, and even get down on their knees before him if he happens to fill a high position with a good salary attached to it, and say to him proudly: 'I told you so.' But the gossip which

they have rolled about fails not to bring them down into this icy region for correction. Did I tell you what the chief of our mottoes is? No? *That which is not right must be made so.* I am glad that you like it. In fact, everybody does, even the wretched souls themselves, since evil-doers can not be happy until they become straightened; and most of them realize it. They say that *Obstinacy in a bad purpose disappears before the right master.*

“Do you know, Mr. Conklin, in spite of the vast business that I do and the great success I have in carrying out my ends, I am often dragged toward the precipice of pessimism and the cynical chasms. It is thus: one can not judge men until one knows how to study motives, without which no sane actions are attempted; yet the very study and understanding of people and their motives opens one’s eyes to the horrors of selfish egotism and jealousy which fill the world from end to end. One sole

thought keeps me from the gloomy paths: *Lofty ambitions ride upon the waves*:—with it I console myself and remain cheerful.

“Of course the case I cited to you is only one in a million. It would take too long to enumerate them all; besides I am not a Jesuit. Is there anything special that you would like to inquire about?”

“Why, yes. What percent of the spirits here in the rain are men?”

“About seventy-five percent, Mr. Conklin.”

“And what percent are women?”

“Seventy-five percent.”

“That is impossible, Satan. In our arithmetic we learn that one hundred percent is the limit that any number can reach.”

“Granted, my dear sir, but it takes a hundred and fifty percent of people like these to make a complement!”

There came a long pause. Conklin's mind was broadening out like an ex-

panded balloon, and his thoughts came thick and fast. "Do you never sleep?" he asked suddenly, looking up at Satan, whose pondering head rested upon his hands—and he was surprised to notice that instead of being rude and coarse with crooked claws, Satan's hands had much refinement and delicacy, together with a nervous strength which was made evident by the showing of the cords upon the backs; they seemed to be homes of thought.

"I try to keep regular hours," was the answer, "because only by such a routine can I accomplish my many tasks. However, like a doctor I am always ready for a call, even in the dead of night. The slightest telephathic message arouses me from slumber; but usually only a short answer is necessary, and after replying I go to sleep again. You see, I have highly organized my work, which could never be done otherwise; my assistants take charge of all the details, like the assistants of a city pastor.

Nevertheless, I take a personal interest in every one of these poor devils who are compelled to live with me in order to learn and be straightened, although they do not realize it, and thus an extra strain is brought upon my mind.

“For instance, I often call a spirit in here to talk with it in a fatherly way and remonstrate with its wickedness. In this manner I have wonderful opportunities for the best influence—much more than most ministers have, who neither dare nor are able to touch a wealthy parishioner on the shoulder and say privately to him or her that he or she would do well to mend his ways—or hers. The ministry on the earth is getting to be a social custom, of which the tea-pot is the greatest instrument. What a beautiful thing it is that social intercourse leads to *society*!—thereby much business is turned in my direction.

“However much I lament over the follies and the corrections of these miserable souls, Conklin, I am always glad to wel-

come them. I suppose that like human beings I take a delight in doing a big business. Complete satisfaction is as far from the mind of a business man as of an idealist—extremes have many similarities, did you ever notice that, sir? As I was saying, I call the shades in here one at a time and discuss their situation with them. Some of them are badly frightened, though many are bold and brazen; the former I treat with the utmost kindness, but to the latter I am stern and severe. Some people think that when you show a little sympathy it is a signal to let loose and take advantage of you. Some again are impressionable and easy to teach, while others are sullen and morose, so thoroughly saturated with selfishness and cynicism that mere argument avails nothing. It really hurts me to send the sensitive out in the rain again; but the hardened spirits I drive out with pleasure.”

The visitor gazed at Satan in amaze-

ment. "You are not half so black as you have been painted!" he cried.

"No," replied the Devil sadly, "I am not what I appear. Most people fancy that I live only to tempt and to destroy; they have been grossly deceived by imaginative writers who gained fame and wordly goods by picturing me as the chief of wicked devils whose purpose is to lead good man astray, but such is their own invention. I am no fallen angel, but the creation of the mind of man. The Hebrews were great people for devils, perhaps because they had and saw more evil in themselves than other races. If you read the Apocrypha you will find many strange tales and stories about devils of all kinds; then the old church fathers made still more of them in order to frighten the poor people into obedience, and throughout the middle ages their influence was felt; the classic work on me is of course Spillton's *Paro'dice Lost*, in which thrilling scenes follow one another like films of the cine-

matograph, but which like most dull moving picture shows can not be relied upon; Luther fathered whole batches of our imps; Calvin sired others; and Cotton Matter and Jonathan Edwards kept the ball a-rolling. I myself was born of Animism and Spiritism, as you would discover by perusing the thing you thought a gun aimed at you by friend Calvin. No, I am not by any means a prince of wickedness, but a king of correction, developed into my full paternity, as I have told you, by the Hebrews and their religious descendants. As is the case with other reformers, I suffer abuse and reviling at the hands not merely of those who need reformation yet wish it not but also of the neutrals who don't know which way to turn and especially fear to go ahead. If I appear cruel it is because I have become case-hardened by contact with so many evil-doers."

"Then you do not believe in sin in the abstract?" Conklin asked with a brighter countenance.

"Not in the abstract, but in the abstraction,—are you not familiar with the eighth commandment? I believe as did the man who, having been asked the same question by a neighbor who happened to be a crooked and unprincipled contractor and bridge-builder, answered, 'No, but I do believe in sin in the concrete!'"

Conklin wanted to laugh but he didn't dare to, so he coughed into his handkerchief instead.

"You must have caught cold, my dear fellow," cried Satan with concern. "Will you not take some quinine?"

"If you had offered me something hot I would have said yes," Conklin replied. "I am a Scotchman, you know."

"Indeed. How long?"

"Forty-six years."

"Then you are old enough to know your own mind. I will have something to your liking served immediately, only never say that I tempted you, for that is against my principles. Temptations

arise in man's own desires, Mr. Conklin, when he comes into contact with things that look good to him. Then, after he has yielded to temptation, he comes into contact with *me*, if he has done serious injury, in order to be corrected. We can not alter the past, but we can at least look out for the future."

Just then an inner door, which Conklin had not noticed, flew open, and an imp entered bearing a tray on which sat two bottles of Scotch and some cakes. The angel of Satan set the tray down upon the central table, and was about to go out when his master rebuked him.

"Mr. Conklin, I should like you to meet Geza, one of my many assistants. His mother was Eve and his father was a heavenly angel. He is all to the good. He used to ascend to visit Luther, who had a strange predilection for the imps of darkness. You remember how he threw an ink-well at one little devil that he had been playing with. Luther had a very changeable and uncertain nature,

as the peasants of Germany discovered, and would as soon turn on a friend as on an enemy.

"There is a story about Luther and my Geza which has never been published. One day when Luther was playing on his clavier, after having tired of his lute, Geza happened to come in. He came up close behind the great reformer, and when the latter turned to the right to play the ride of Walkurie on the upper notes Geza banged with all his might on one of the bass keys. Luther bent over his great head with that phlegmatic-excitabile expression common to Dutchmen, and, catching sight of the invisible imp as he fled around the corner, cried angrily, 'That was a Hell of a note!' It was really a bass trick, but I enjoyed it immensely. Run, Geza."

"That certainly was funny," Conklin remarked, wiping away the tears from his eyes. "This Scotch is hot, and it's

good! Say, Satan, do you think there is any harm in this?"

"If you thought there was harm in it you would not have taken it, would you? No, surely not. A man of your morals and your judgment ought to be able to decide what is right and what is not. However, whiskey is hardly the key to health, happiness and altruism; it is a master-key only in that it is more master than servant; but the thing that hurts me the most is the enormous adulteration of liquors which passes unnoticed by the federal government, probably because the tax on impure liquor looks the same as the tax on pure. What a remarkable thing and just that the poor man gets the worst of everything!—poisonous drink, poisonous food, and poisonous air! Let us drink, Mr. Conklin, to the health of the poor man—God bless him. I see, brother, that you prefer whiskey-toast to milk-toast, like all patriotic men of your race. Have another?"

"No, thank you, not just now. I be-

lieve in drinking only in a measure, Mr. Devil."

"If you wish, then, I'll have Geza bring you a gallon can."

"Don't bother—I only want to wet my gills. It's strange that you can't hear the rain in here."

"Not so strange after all, my dear man: I arranged it so. Once in a while I have Geza place a large sheet of galvanized iron over the den, whenever I want to ponder over the days of my childhood and become sentimental; then, you see, it reminds me of the flood—the great flood of '00. What a terrible time that was! Lots of poor people were drowned, but many were saved, in spite of the reports. The associated press got the cablegram wrong; and, after the news once traveled that Noah and his family were the only ones saved, Noah, who was a young Morgan, felt so complimented that he bought up the press and all contemporary literature in order to keep the advertisement. If I remem-

ber rightly, he set up a tailor shop in the town of Arrahrat and sold small-clothes to measure; and they said he did a thriving business; he would have become a pawnbroker and put articles up the spout for poor people and charged them anywhere from ten to twenty percent a month, but not only were there no articles left after the deluge to pawn, but also he did not like to be reminded of the rain. There is a report that when the ark-lights went out one night on their journey to the mountain-top Noah picked the pockets—I mean the noses—no I means the ears of half his companions, but I can not believe that of him. The fact is, however, that he did charge the elephants double price for checking their trunks, and when they kicked about it he put mice under their feet. Thus graft began. Noah was something of a politician, too: one day he ran for governor when the raft went in the wrong direction, on the famous plank,

'E pluribus unus.' What are you writing in your notebook, Mr. Conklin?"

"I am taking down what you have have been saying about Noah and the flood, in order that I may tell it to my Sunday-school class. You surely have no objections?"

"My only objection is that you might also stuff their tender minds so full of old-fashioned dope—I, the origin of sin, etc.—that they would not know which way to walk in order to find Sunday."

"Well, what would you teach them?"

"I would do the way many modern psychologists do—fill them up with reactions and watch them scrape the mud off their brains with the hope of discovering where they are; in other words, I would stick pins into them and laugh when they jump."

Conklin looked horrified. "Would you never tell them the truth?"

"Who knows the truth? Who would dare to tell it to a Sunday-school class or a church full of prunes if he did know

it? How the old geezers force worm-eaten relics of antiquity down the throats of the young, and hang like grim death to the coat-tails of the world so that they can kick it full of holes whenever they feel inclined! Did you know that many so-called atheists get that way because they were taught in their early days things which stuck crosswise in their gizzard when they came to maturity?—praying for material objects, for instance; the idea that God has the qualities of a man, etc. When one does not know, let him say frankly that he does not know; if he must prattle, prattle his puerile speculations to mud-turtles. Many systematic philosophers, preachers and teachers are serving time with me for having wasted life chewing the rag over things about which they knew nothing; the case would not be half so bad had they not shoved their adulterated dope on the unwitting public.

“You will be interested in hearing about the wonderful case of the spirit

of John Dough. He had made a fool of himself while alive by writing speculative philosophy simply to make a big reputation regardless of the ill effects of his doings upon the multitude. The other day I received a telepham from Brother Beelzebub in his office. It ran thus: 'One of our most noted spirits is raving. What shall I do? Signed Beelzie.' I telephammed back: 'What is the nature of his madness?' 'Keeps repeating "Whingwhing bosk bosk kalgie bum!"' came the reply. I laughed so hard that I almost split, and for days I snickered and laughed to myself when the humor of it struck me. I wired right back: 'Give him a certificate of release and send him on his way happy.' Do you know what the poor devil said? 'The arguments of speculative philosophy be damned!' I don't blame Beelzie for not having understood it because it is a language known only to those who have specialized in Logic and Logic's brood — Ruemaniac, its name."

"I am rather surprised to hear this," said Conklin, wrinkling up his eyebrows. "As for me myself, I have always been extremely interested in Philosophy; and I have heard it said that no man can be a great thinker unless he knows the history of systematic philosophy at his fingers' ends."

Satan sighed. "Such is, unfortunately, the common opinion of people who have studied it themselves and are able to sling it about with some fuss. Let me ask you a question, Mr. Conklin, which I know you will answer sincerely: How much did you ever get out of your study of other men's technical, philosophical systems?"

"Not very much," answered Conklin opening his eyes wide and then closing them in order to think better.

"Did you ever peek inside of a dark whiskey bottle only to find nothing there? Of course—we all have; yet we wouldn't have been satisfied unless we had examined the bottle. It is just so

with systematic philosophy: it begins with nothing, uses a language that nobody understands, and ends where it began. The good one receives from it is first a direction of the thoughts along serious directions, and secondly the exercise the brain gets from running around dark corners after something that is not there. The thinking man who works on the railroad and solves his problems does more than the systematizer whose name appears on the pay-roll of fame. You must be tired by this time, Brother Conklin. Should you not like to sleep? Geza, show Mr. Conklin to his bedroom, and place a brand-new bottle of Scotch beside the bed, so that if he should happen to awake during the night he will have the spirits of darkness near by to comfort him. Good-night, brother, sleep well."

CHAPTER VI

CIRCUS CLASSICUS

JAMES CONKLIN was aroused in the morning, after a beautiful and restful slumber, by the imp Geza, who touched him lightly on the shoulder and told him that if he desired he could have a cold shower by stepping out-of-doors by the back way; but he shook his head at the thought of running through the icy rain like a guilty spirit, took a wee nippie, and hastened to clothe himself. Then he tackled the steaming breakfast which Geza brought, wondering all the time that he ate, how under the earth it had been prepared. He enjoyed it immensely.

"Hello, Geza!" he cried. "Where did this delicious steak come from?"

"From Maine, sir. It is a mees-steak. Do you not like it, sir?"

"Splendid! Where is the Devil?"

"He is out on the bank waiting for you, sir. He said that when you were ready—no hurry, sir—you should come out through the front door."

Sure enough, when Conklin arrived at the entrance, there stood the Hell-master with two umbrellas in his hand, which he put down in order to assist Conklin with his outer garments.

"I know that you had a good sleep," said he. "Now you are in much better condition for traveling farther down. I just sent to Charon a telepham informing him that he must stop at our story and wait on us."

"How it does rain!" Conklin exclaimed as they stepped outside. "Does it never let up?" Evidently he had half expected to find it clear in the morning.

"Never, unless the plumbing gets out of order, in which case we summon the imps of torture and corral the spirits into the icy lakes, where they must remain until the repairs are completed by the plumbers."

"Then do they hand in their bills?"

"Ha ha! that is a good joke. No, when they descend into our institution they leave their bills and wills above to cause a peck of trouble. Some of the crookedest of the bunch go plumb crazy from the awful heat to which we subject them; but the experimenters soon get a line on them and fix them up. Be careful with your umbrella—you nearly put my eye out. You will pardon me for not having a canopy for you, will you not, Mr. Conklin? I thought that you preferred to rough it, having been a soldier in the Spanish war, where soldiers were treated like criminals and all beef was corrupted; and besides"—here Satan whispered in James's ear after taking out the plug with his left hand—"we do not like the word *canopy*—it sounds like —"

At that instant a huge, horrid-looking bird flew close to their umbrellas and gave a grating cry.

"What was that?" cried Conklin with a start and a shudder.

"Oh, that is the shade of the Prude Bird. It was sired by Immodesty and mired by Curiosity; it has tempted many souls into Hell, especially the young and tender."

Neither spoke until they had arrived at the 'elevator station where they found Charon leaning up against the corner of the door reading a newspaper. He looked up when he heard their steps and tried in vain to hide the sheet.

"What in Sam Hill are you doing with that thing?" Satan shouted in a rage. The whole of Hell shook from the vibrations, thunders pealed on the left, and green lightnings shot through the air. The reconstructed boy trembled like an aspen leaf, and his eyes wheeled around toward each other, so frightened were they.

"I-I-I am-m-m r-r-read-ding-g about-t th-the Mex-xic-c-an horrors, the

European War, and the Ne Ork underworld, Sir," he stammered out.

The Dark Prince waved his hand sharply toward the lever of the 'elevator. "Get in there quick and start her up. Our time is precious."

Charron hung his head from shame and took his position without delay; he closed the door when the travelers were safely esconced on the soft seat; and turned on the power. The 'elevator shot downward even more rapidly than before, but now the human visitor had become somewhat accustomed to its motion.

"You will find it brighter in the Circus Classicus than in the circus we just left," said Satan, "since we have an artificial sun, and moon, and stars overhead. Perhaps you had better shade your eyes when you step out, for I would not have you return to the earth with your eyesight impaired."

"What is this next circle—the Circus Classicus, did you say?"

"It is the *Classy Club*, just as its name denotes. It is peopled with spirits who, while they lived, tried to be superior to others in social ways, snubbing their poorer fellows for one superficial reason or another. Naturally they come from all countries and climes; there are plenty of representatives from the whole country in spite of the extreme youthfulness of the nation and its democratic principles."

"Do you mean that Christians come here?" demanded Conklin in great surprise.

"Who said that Christians come here? No true Christian comes here, for such not only never harm others, but whatever they have whether money, time, or talent—they give freely and lovingly to their fellow men in a way that will benefit them. Why should they come here? The spirits I am speaking about put on false airs in order to let their neighbors feel that they, themselves would-be aristocrats, belong to a superior class. They

have done great evil, because they stifled their own better qualities to begin with, and then gave needless offense and irritation to others, thus causing superficial imitation, if not bitter jealousy, and either hatred of all things that smack of aristocracy or love of them: hence a general perversion of time and thought, and much nonsense."

"Then you do not believe in aristocracy?"

"Of course I do—aristocracy of character, which is the only kind where there is good, better and best. Most aristocracies are all bad, and many are rotten."

"Yet—are you, the Prince of Devils, not an aristocrat?"

"No, sir: I am a Plutocrat!" answered Satan sharply. He whipped his legs with his tail nervously for a minute, and then he continued in a much calmer manner: "I think we had better change the subject, Conklin."

But his visitor had no desire to arouse a contention of any kind. He had come

to observe, not to argue; and besides he saw the wicked tail still swinging viciously, and its point was sharp. So he settled down on the velvet and went to sleep.

When he awoke, he found himself still lying on the bench in the 'elevator, all alone with Charon, who stood peering at him with his flaming eyes, which now turned furiously away from each other as if they had been quarreling; the old boy's fetid breath seemed worse than ever, in spite of the many charcoal tablets he had swallowed since morning at his master's directions.

"Turn your head toward the door, Charron, just—I think you have a wonderful profile—that's it—keep it that way! How sunny it is! I fancied for the moment I was back in a Ne Ork 'elevator, just. Where is Satan?"

"He went out to stop a disturbance, sir, and left word for me to stay here without making any noise until you should wake up, sir."

"What was the disturbance?"

"Why, one of the new arrivals tried to make Satan's sun stand still, and the crowd quit work to see the fun."

"Who was this new arrival?"

"A Mellican millionaire, sir."

"Are you familiar with his name?"

"Yes, sir, because I happened to hear my master shout it when he flew out of the 'elevator—Johannus Jacobus Astrolagus. Then I heard Satan ask him whether he took the sun for a virgin or just wanted to try his hand against all Hell. I didn't catch the answer, sir, but I did get the rest of it, and I had to stop up my ears, sir, it was so horrible!"

James squirmed in his seat and covered his eyes with his hands. Then he reached into his pocket and took out a dime, which he held out to Charon.

"No thank you, sir," said Charron much to Conklin's surprise, who was evidently in the habit of giving tips in return for personal attentions. "Master does not allow me to receive money

from his customers. Some of them have offered me as much as ten billion dollars, would you believe it, sir; but I care not for money—I work for love—master treats me kindly, sir; and I prefer a kind word to all the treasures of Mammon. Ten cents, sir? Why, that wouldn't buy an ice-cream soda down here! Satan said you might walk around until he came back, or if you preferred you could sit on that cushion, which I will put out of doors for you, sir."

Conklin dropped the dime absent-mindedly, and was very much surprised to see a burning hand reach up from the 'elevator floor, receive the coin in its grasp, and consume it utterly with sulphurous flames; then the hand disappeared whence it came, and nothing was left of either (it was a right hand) but a noisome odor of brimstone.

"Did you see that?" he shouted to Charon.

"See what?" replied the latter with indifference.

"That hand! Where did it come from?"

"Most likely from the Mosaic on the floor. These Jews are great grabbers. But where will you wait for Satan, here on the cushion by the elevator wall or walking around the circle? Come, sir, I must be going."

"Pardon me—I was startled. Why, I'll sit on the cushion, if it's the same to you."

"Surely. Here you are, sir. Master will return before long," and with that he closed the door and buzzed upward faster than lightning.

Meanwhile Conklin took his seat outside. He had to shade his eyes on account of the bright light which came from the artificial sun. Feeling tired from his previous exertions, which his recent slumbers had not been sufficient to counteract entirely, he laid his head upon one hand and fell fast asleep.

Soon Satan returned. "Hell-o, Conklin!" he cried cheerfully, in the man-

ner of one who has accomplished well his task. "Come, wake up before I have to stick you with my tail!"

The Hell-visitor came to his senses in an instant. "The Devil of a man you'd be to stick your visitors and injure your patronage!" he answered, tit for tat. "Do you take me for a pin-cushion? Wait until I have chosen your mansion for my home. Where to now, your majesty?"

"Do you see that group of spirits off in the distance? We shall commence with them. Well, what do you think of our sun?"

"Great stuff, Devil. At first I almost fancied it was the real thing."

"So do many of our workmen until they discover *me* in the neighborhood: then they come to with a start, just as you did—ha!"

"Who are those spirits ahead? They appear to be digging something from the ground with shovels."

"They are digging, and pretty lively,

too. See the imps with whips? They don't allow any delay—against the rules of our bosses. Did you ask me who those spirits are? They are for the most part Bawdway and Piph Avenue millionaires—I mean they *were*. Now they are peons digging for dear life. It's the worst punishment imaginable for them. They would gladly change places with any of the others, except perhaps those down stairs; but we give them no favors."

James's eyes stuck out again when he heard this, and he staggered. "P-pardon m-me," he stammered, pinching his legs in order to regain control of himself, "but it came suddenly. Why, we poor devils on earth look up to *those* men as if they were gods, and worship them. To tell the truth—if you will not repeat it—I think it's a deuced good thing! But all the millionaires don't come here to work, do they?"

"No indeed, not any more than the whole of any so-called class. Many rich

men are better than thousands of people with little or no money; and a few of them are wonderful men. Do you see that fellow just swinging the pick over his shoulder? He is an interesting character. I'll call him—I wouldn't waste a telepham on him."

At the snap of the Demon's tail the whole gang threw down their picks and shovels and commenced to rub their hands.

"Hey, you!" shouted the master angrily, "do you think it's noon? Not on your sweet life, nor ever will be down here for you. Look for your shadows, if you don't believe me. Ha ha! Why, you are *all* shadow! Should you like to exchange shifts with your dear comrades in the Circus Horri—"

The diggers did not wait for him to finish his sentence, but seized their implements and began to work so fast that the whips of their correctors hit the air above their backs.

"That's better, boys," laughed Satan.

"Rustle Sagebusch, you lay down your pick and come here to me."

The spirit addressed did as he was bid, and trembling from fear approached the travelers. He could not endure the curious gaze which Conklin played upon him as if trying to remember where he had seen him before, but dropped his eyes and stood like a culprit.

"Why were you sent here to the lower regions, Rustle Sagebusch?" demanded the Devil with no gentle voice.

"I-I-I—because of my generosity," replied the shade after a moment's hesitation.

"All right. Now go back to your work, and if I have occasion to correct you again you'll take your chances in the circle that I do not need to mention, sirrah. Mr. Conklin does not care to speak to a peon of *your* class, either. Go! Pardon me for a little roughness, Brother Conklin. That man is a fake!

"He belongs to the same class as a friend of mine who, having been prom-

inent in his primary life on earth, started upwards by mistake when he turned up his toes. The gate-keeper saw him coming up the hill, and had his record in hand when my friend, whose name I will not divulge, arrived; so, having the facts in black and white, he said to my friend that the balance of his account was on the debit side, and told him to go to Hell. It was a shock to him, of course, but he should have known better than start off in the wrong direction."

Conklin laughed; but when he saw tears of sorrow drop down Satan's cheek he burst out crying.

"There, there!" said Satan softly, "don't cry,—take it easy. Some day these rich people will wake up to their responsibilities before they come down here, and then perhaps they won't have to come down. It's a lucky thing we have something to look forward to. Did you notice what these shadows are working on? They are digging a sewer through which to run off, when com-

pleted, the impurities that drop from these—er—peons, these correctees.”

“Do you have no woman suffrage here, Satan? I see none toiling on the sewer.”

“Sure we do. Did you imagine that we would make the poor men suffer and not the women? As a rule they are to blame for their husbands’ tendencies toward superficial show and aristocratic bearing. What do you think Mr. Tom, Dick or Harry would care for style if his wife did not drive him to it in order to give her a social standing above some other poor—of misery? We give the women plenty to do, all right, all right—they scrub floors and do divers dirty work in the mud-holes. We have only one shift for day and night, too, in these regions. However, these things can not be very interesting to you. Let’s come over to the races.”

“Do you have races down here?”

“Sure we do. Having been somewhat of a high-flyer myself in my early days, I like to combine correction with sport

whenever feasible. This way, please."

Like old chums they sauntered across the fields arm in arm; and Conklin listened attentively while the Reformer described the methods and ideals of the Circus Classicus. Here at least there was need for neither fur-coat nor asbestos covering, although an umbrella might have served as a protection against the rays of the artificial sun; but, since Conklin found a pair of blue spectacles in his pocket and put them on to shade his eyes, he minded not the heat, which after the torrid flames of the Circus Maximus, seemed warm and pleasant like a beautiful day in June.

"I felt obliged to arrange at least one spot cozy and agreeable," the Devil remarked. "It serves a double purpose: not only can I come here and lie on my back on the grass and enjoy the sun-light while I ponder over my problems and muse about the past, but the spirits are reminded of the beautiful world they left, so that first they mourn, and then

bemoan the misuse they made of their earthly time and station. Stirring the emotions is a great factor in correction."

"What is that great thing ahead that looks like a stadium?" demanded James.

"It *is* a stadium. There are great numbers of them scattered thro' the circus, and this is Number I."

"What is the tall structure that looks like a tower off to the right of the stadium?"

"That is my private observation tower, whence I obtain a splendid view of the whole proceedings; thither we are now proceeding."

When they came to the tower, an imp wearing a buttoned uniform opened wide the door and bowed low until they had entered; then another angel ushered them into the 'elevator and carried them to the top in a trice.

"Will you kindly explain to me, Satan," asked James in a low voice, "why it is that you dress some of the imps but leave the spirits bare?"

"With much pleasure," replied the Prince of Sports as he motioned his visitor into an easy chair by the railing. "You see, the special service imps must be well dressed for the looks of things, whereas the correction-helpers, such as you have seen with pitchforks, whips, *et cetera*, could not accomplish well their tasks if they wore clothing. You know how it is yourself: when you are all rigged up in your Sunday go-to-meeting garments, you naturally avoid anything that smacks of manual labor as a cat avoids dying on the front doorstep. Now the spirits who come here from the upper world for reform have suffered eclipse of the peepers during life-time on account of the superficial coverings over everything they saw. Just for an easy, simple example in a physical way: they see a foot—a neat, trim, well-dressed foot—which pleases their optics and makes them fancy that a nice foot has an absolute value far up in the thousands; remove the leathern covering,

and what do you discover? a flabby piece of stinking flesh adorned with corns, onions and other vegetables; but *they* have no means of knowing that, so they depart filled with false admiration. Again: we are 'at a reception: the beautiful dames stand at the door and receive, with the aid of a gentleman or two, the fine looking specimens of humanity that pass through: 'Great stuff!' you whisper excitedly as one after another they absorb the lime-light and charm the beholders; but strip them in their *chambres* and what do you find? vulgar masses of fat or lean surmounted by a head that might have been made in a carpenter's shop and finished in the paint- or dye-house, and tonsorial parlors. In other words, appearances deceive, and reality is eclipsed by the outward show,—umbra, numbra, and penumbra.

"Here, however, the case is different, Mr. Conklin: each spirit, whether male or female, stands forth as he really is,

and not only can we perceive at a glance just what is there and what is not, but they themselves behold the naked truth about themselves and their acquaintances for the first time. Thus wisdom gradually usurps the place which blindness formerly held."

"I am glad you explained it to me, Satan," said Conklin frankly, "because although I said nothing about it, when I first saw the naked spirits I was somewhat jarred."

"Jars are good when the cover is tight," returned the Devil with an amused smile. "I knew that you had a proper control over yourself, else I would not have brought you down. Of course these spirits feel no shame on account of the *nakedness* itself, for the very reason that they have no passion; their shame comes from seeing the *reality*."

"While we are talking we are missing part of the performance, Brother James. The Hippodrome is the act today. Do

you see those souls riding around the ring at a furious speed?"

"Yes, and I wondered what they were doing before you called my attention to them. Are they really indulging in sport, or is there some correction connected with it?"

"I should say so," answered the other eagerly. "The pleasure that comes from the sport end of it is ours—mine and the imps'; whereas the other side is theirs.

"Listen: the imps provide a selected number of hobby-horses that go like the deuce, and then an equal number of imps leap upon other hobbies whose speed is a trifle greater than the first; the starter gives the spirits the signal when they are fairly well arranged on the line with the imps a thousand yards behind, and off they go lickety-cut. See! they are just starting! Hurrah! hurrah! go it, old boys, go it! Pardon me, James, for becoming excited. When the imps finally catch up with the correctees, they leap upon them and try to cut out their

insolence and haughtiness and worthless pride by the aid of hooked knives. That part of the game is not so pleasant to behold, I acknowledge, like the killing of the horses in a Spanish bull-fight, but it is necessary, and beneficial, too. There they go again—the last lap! See the imps gain on the poor devils! Now they are sticking them! Hurrah! You do not wonder I love to come here, do you, Mr. Conklin? The beauty of it all is that we combine pleasure with profit; I rejoice to think that every one of those racy spirits will be a better—more charitable person in his next existence. Look quick, James! This next race is a side-saddle affair. Wouldn't you like to stay here for a week, though? Did you notice the group waving their hands by the eastern gate? They are the book-makers, and they have the tenth race on the program."

"Do the poor wretches never win, Satan?"

"Once in a while, for the sake of

encouraging them, yes; but we blow them up afterwards."

"How do you blow them up?"

"You notice the bleachers filled with spirits awaiting their turn on the track? Well, the imps wait until each one has won a race from them, and then they have a few mock races among themselves in which neither chased nor chasers win; and the crowd goes wild from excitement, being reminded of the moving-picture shows that govern the earth; but just before the end of the last lap a brazen-throated fiend gets up into the judges' stand and cries out through a megaphone:—'Don't get excited, ladies and gentlemen—a bomb is about to go off!'; and, sure enough, the bomb explodes and hurls the wretches in every direction—mostly up in the air; then we call them down again, a little bit worse for wear, but very amenable to correction; some return so much out of shape that the demons lay them on the track and ride over them until they re-

form, to the great delectation of the hobbies, whose hoofs thus obtain a rest. The latter method of straightening them out is called the Racial Pressure."

"Are all these souls rich people—I mean *were?*" asked Conklin with a shudder, for at that moment the imp-riders caught up with the side-saddlers.

"No, no indeed. Perhaps sixty per-cent of them never saw a great deal of money at once, but they all were guilty of the noxious sin of uncharitableness combined with classy contempt of other people. In the second stadium belong those souls who when alive owned automobiles and became disdainful on that account. Since their treatment is somewhat similar to this that you see, we shall not take the time and trouble to go there. I might tell you, nevertheless, how their races are managed: automobiles start out like the hobbie-horses; and when the souls congratulate themselves that they are drawing away from the imps a huge bar is suddenly dropped

across the track, and the contemptuous classics are hurled against pitchforks which the gleeful demons hold out to them. That is what I call real fun. Then of course the bar is withdrawn in order that the pursuing imps may have the pleasure of running over the fallen souls. I'll tell you the name of this game if you won't breathe a word of it," whispered the Devil, glancing around to see whether any imp were near enough to hear.

"Not a word, upon my honor, Satan."

"We call it Crossing the Bar! Ha ha! startled you some, didn't it? I knew it would. That's the kind of a bar these people cross."

"You are a bar-bar-ous lot!" murmured Conklin with a wry face.

"Not many barbers here," answered Satan, who misunderstood his visitor's remark. "Whatever few do come are assigned to other circles usually. Of course you might find a few who despised their customers because they did

not receive an extra tip, but in any case they get tipped here."

"What do you think of the Hoolihan, the Hoolihan, the Hoolihan!" Conklin suddenly sang, rising from his seat and swinging his arms around his head. His head had lost its fine balance through too much excitement and horror and sympathy for the miserable crew of classy despisers.

"We had better go right back to the 'elevator, sir," exclaimed Satan, who became anxious for the welfare of his guest. "Charron is a skillful masseur, and he will make you feel fine."

"Those little hands — those little hands!" cried Conklin, wringing his powerful paws with all his might.

"Buza! Buza!" Satan signaled to the imp downstairs, "bring up two bottles of hot Scotch at once; at once!"

Hardly had the imp received the telepham when he appeared before his master with the goods on a tray with glasses. Conklin rushed forward, for-

getting his madness, and drained one of the bottles at a single draught. "Two a penny, three a penny, hot cross buns!" he shouted, and then sank down in a heap.

Satan placed the sleeping man gently on a couch which stood beneath an awning, and stroked his head. As a glistening tear fell upon his sandy hair, his twisted features relaxed and his rapid, irregular breathing became as peaceful as that of a slumbering child.

"Poor fellow!" said the Devil with a sigh. "This has been too much for him. I should not have told him what I did, because it seemed to upset him—grated perhaps on his religious consciousness, which is remarkably developed in these Scotchmen. Nevertheless, the hot tonic and a little sleep will bring him around all right." So he left him reclining on the couch protected from the glaring sun, which doubtlessly had much to do with the sudden stroke, and took his seat by the rail to meditate.

CHAPTER VII

CIRCUS PYROTECHNALIS

WHEN James Conklin awoke from his long sleep, he found himself in a most comfortable bed. Sunshine flooded in through the windows, one ray of it falling upon a beautiful picture of Cleopatra ascending the Nile. The walls were decorated with paper of a lovely blue color which satisfied the eye completely. There hung other pictures too; and a blue and white chiffonier stood between the windows, surmounted by a French plate mirror of oval shape. Altogether the room exuded a feminine atmosphere, which was not displeasing to Conklin to say the least.

"Hell-o!" he called. "Hell-o! Where am I? Who is there?"

The door was opened quietly and a soft voice said: "You are among friends,

Mr. Conklin. I am your nurse, or rather I have been, and I am glad that you woke up so nicely. Are you hungry?"

"Hungry as a bear," growled James, proving the proverb that says the strongest man is the worst patient. "Who are you anyway?" He tried to rise in order to see who was speaking to him.

"Oh, don't get up just now, Mr. Conklin," answered the gentle voice with a little laugh. "You are hardly in a fit condition to be seen, you know. Wait until after breakfast, and then you can dress and come down stairs, where my husband is waiting for you." A wonderful female vision placed a tray containing a bountiful breakfast on the bed and disappeared before James could get a good look at her.

He sighed, and then devoured the meal like a man who has not eaten for forty-two hours—Scotch oatmeal, cream, sugar, rolls, butter, marmalade, eggs, baked potatoes, steak, grapefruit, and a glass of hot toddy. Then he sighed

again, and after rolling over in bed several times as if loath to leave it he stepped out onto the floor and commenced to dress himself, after taking a sponge bath from the basin of a hand-painted wash-stand, since he found his clothes, neatly pressed, lying on a chair near the bed. He sighed a third time when he took up his scarf, which had been smoothed out to look like new: a diamond pin stuck in it—and surely he wore no scarf-pin when he left home with Satan! However, he thrust the pin into its place in the center of the tie below the knot, and then looked to see whether the same hands that left the pin had not also bestowed a diamond breast-pin! A little disappointed, Conklin brushed his hair with the gold-backed brushes which lay on the dresser, and went down stairs with the air of a man who does not quite understand where he is but is determined to be master of the situation at any cost.

“Hell-o!” cried a familiar voice. “I

thought my wife would fix you up all right, Conklin. I did not like to bring you here at first, out of principle, but you slept so long at the top of the tower that I became alarmed about your condition and decided to put you in feminine hands. There is nothing like a woman to cure a sick man, you can count on that."

James rubbed his forehead with his hands as if he was trying to connect the present with the past, and looked first at Satan, who sat in an easy chair smoking a pipe—the smell of which savored strongly of brimstone, and then at his wife, the lovely Cleopatra herself, who stood behind her husband with a smile on her beautiful face.

"That's all right, old man," said Satan, rising to his feet and extending his hand to his visitor. "Never mind what has happened in the past. My wife says that you are all right again, and that is the main thing just now. Have a good breakfast? No headache? Nothing like a

Scotch temperance to give a man a good constitution—and Scotch whiskey to pull him out of danger—eh? And in lieu of a Scotch girl, a pretty Egyptian does fairly well, what? Sit down and make yourself at home. Let me introduce you formally to Cleopatra, my wife. Have you seen to the kitchen fire, my dear? to the hens? to the children? You will excuse her, will you not, Mr. Conklin, for she has much to do. Are you feeling strong enough to continue our little journey?"

"Just as you say," replied Conklin, watching Cleopatra until she disappeared. "I am ready for anything."

"Yes, I think we had better be moving right along. Your time is no doubt valuable, as is mine, and if you are feeling as well as you appear, you will be all right for the rest of the journey, which is not so very long now. Cleopatra! Cleopatra! Mr. Conklin is going away, and he wishes to say good-by to you."

Cleopatra appeared in the door-way

with a silken duster of blue color tied around her head. "Good-by, Mr. Conklin," she said with a charming smile, "I am sorry you were sick; but I hope you will not forget us when you return to your own home. Excuse my negligee, won't you? Good-by."

James hardly knew which end he was standing on. "Good-by," he said, mechanically, and his eyes followed her all the way to the door as she went back to the kitchen to finish her work.

"Come on, Conklin," said Satan. "Here is your hat. There is no time to waste. I had Gaza bring an automobile so that you would not have to walk to the 'elevator. Step in—lively, please! Not more than a hundred miles an hour, Gaza, for we wish to view the country as we go by. See this beautiful landscape? blue mountains? blue river? blue grass? Had it put there to please Cleopatra. Did you notice the Clematis Verticillaris on the side of the veranda? The blue-jays come to build their nests in it. The

lawn is made of bluets instead of the horrible green grass which most commuting mortals with artificial tastes sow and reap continually and keep well covered with horse and cow droppings mixed with straw. Our ensign is the blue-flag. Our clothes are washed in bluine. Cleopatra has no chance to get homesick, I tell you. Here we are at the station. Toot toot! All aboard!"

Charon, who had been expecting his master and his visitor, shut the 'elevator door with a bang, so startled was he to see Satan in such a strange mood; and his wheeling eyes whirled around rapidly to the right, in the direction of the demon prince, very suspiciously.

"This seems to be the same place where we got out the last time," remarked Conklin, who had regained the use of his faculties, tongue included.

"Down like Hell, old boy!" cried Satan to the ex-ferryman, who obeyed so promptly that Conklin was thrown violently against the top of the 'elevator,

where he remained the rest of the journey, gazing down at Satan with a piteous expression. Evidently the latter was cross about something; he said not another word until they arrived at the next circle and Charon had swung wide the gates; but he caught James in his arms as he fell from the ceiling like a little child, and carrying him out set him upon his feet on the ground.

"You know I was provoked at being compelled to take you to my home," he said in a gentler manner, "but now I feel as if you were my own child, and we'll be good friends again. That was the same circus, as you remarked. Do you suppose I would go to the trouble of having two suns, two moons, and two sets of stars? They were contrived especially for Cleopatra, and not for the souls, as I may have led you to believe. We have enjoyed many a trip through the country of an afternoon, and many a delightful spin, and many a wonderful spoon in the moonlight. Ah, my boy!

"However, there are other things to think of now. We are in the Circus Pyrotechnalis, which is to me the most interesting of all, leaving out the one where I live, of course. Does not the name of the place connote the picture of a Fourth of July celebration? I am afraid that the spirits who receive correction here think otherwise; but if they had been wise above they would not now have to think otherwise below. Who are they? Public and political offenders. We shall step in this building for a moment. You'd better put on your blue glasses, boy. Hades, what a heat! I had almost forgotten that it was so intense. Get behind me and you will not feel it so much. Can you distinguish those spirits hanging over the rafters? Ha! They were distinguished on the earth, but here they are almost extinguished—ha ha! anguished—ha! They were public officials, such as mayors, kings, governors, presidents, congressmen, and so forth, who intentionally made use of their authority

to fill their own coffers and further their own interests, and who did not do their best for the people whom they were supposed to help; all who oppose preparedness, since they are traitors; and newspaper men who published false news that did injury to the country. *They are too green to burn, and so they are hanging up there to dry!* Ha ha! ha ha!" His laugh was terrible.

"What a horrid noise they are making!" cried Conklin, putting the plugs quickly into his ears.

"They are having a royal time of it," Satan said. "Many of them are famous characters, some of whom you might recognize from having seen their pictures, if you could get a good glimpse of their faces; but they purposely hide their features or distort them so as to be unrecognizable; and perhaps it is best thus, for who wants to see such dirty trash?"

"Over on the other side of the building where those rows of huge fire-places stand, there the active *traitors* slowly

roast on spits that turn in the very flames: the turning of the spits indicates the manner in which they deserted their country in the time of need. Let us approach and speak to them."

Conklin's eyes bulged out until they nearly touched the blue glass perched in front of them, but then quickly retreated into their sockets on account of the heat: he had recognized Benedict Arnold! He gasped for breath, and turned away in order not to see the horrid contortions of the sallow face.

"Not him!" he hoarsely whispered. "Someone else!" So they went farther along, until they came before a spike on which a wretched victim's whole body was convulsed from agony.

"Who are you?" demanded Conklin, without waiting for the Hell-master to speak, as had been his custom previously.

"I was Alcibiades," answered the spirit with a twist and a groan. Then, when his face revolved again, he added painfully: "What do you want with me, human soul?"

An expression of disgust passed over the questioner's features. "With you? Nothing! Turn away, vile traitor!" The unfortunate spirit did as the other requested—from necessity; and his dreadful countenance, which during his stay on earth had been so beautiful that men and women could not help loving him, despite his wickedness, moved slowly toward the wall.

"Should you like to speak to Aeschines?" asked Satan, who had watched with serious but unmoved physiognomy the intercourse between his visitor and the punishees.

"No," replied Conklin earnestly. "A little goes a long way here. Let us leave these degraded ghosts and continue on our journey. There must be other things worth examining in the Pyrotechnical Circle, and more pleasant than this."

"As you wish, brother," Satan answered. "It is in your interests that we came here, not mine. Which should you care to visit next: the second section of

national pilferers, or the uncommon grafters?"

"What is the difference between them?"

"There is no difference except in the name and in the method of correction—both orders are full of ordure."

"Whichever you choose, therefore, Mr. Devil—only take me out of this building—the odor of roasting flesh is more than I can endure, especially after my spell of—ahem—ha—er—sickness."

"You named it well, my boy," returned Satan pityingly. "At first I was minded to send you up to the clinic for the alienists to treat you; but on second thought I remembered that I have made no stranger of you, and therefore I changed my plan. You came out of the large end of the horn—with flying colors." He looked up at his visitor suddenly and scrutinized him sharply; finding but a far-away expression, he changed the subject. "I shall take you

first to the correction of the national pilferers, and then we shall be better able to plan about the rest."

After leaving the traitors' castle, as Satan styled it, they arrived before long at an adamantine structure fashioned somewhat in the manner of a medieval fortress, about which hundreds of imps were playing leap-frog. When they beheld his devilish majesty they rapidly formed in line and gave the military salute to him and to his companion, who was surprised at the sight of so many little demons and their peculiar proceedings, although he felt complimented by the ceremony.

"How is everything in the fort?" demanded Satan of the captain.

"All well, your majesty," replied the latter, bowing low.

"Return to your game, then, my children, and enjoy yourselves while you may. Have you finished with the special correction?"

"Yes, your majesty. Only ten had to

be shipped up to the clinic this time to have their nerves readjusted, and they are already on the way up."

"Very good. Follow me in, James, and let nothing alarm you, for fate is with you."

They sped upward upon a moving escalator and soon had passed within the forbidding gates of the fortress.

"Why do you have such a strong guard outside?" asked the visitor, who just now gave up trying to imagine the reason by himself.

"Because we have so much money in the fort," answered Satan. "Do you think we would leave our most precious possessions unguarded? Money is the root of all evil, the worldly proverb says, and naturally it is invaluable for our purposes in this circus. This way, please."

They stepped through an open door to the right, and found themselves in a large office, which was well lighted by means of pale-green electric lamps. In the farthest corner was a desk of tremen-

dous proportions with a roll top, before which sat a man whose mind appeared to be deeply absorbed in figuring out a difficult problem, since he was muttering to himself as he drew designs and numbers upon a large sheet of greenish paper and wrinkling up his forehead, only part of which showed beneath a black treasurer's cap, unwholesomely. He jumped to his feet immediately upon seeing the visitors, and made a reverend salaam. Conklin was surprised to find him dressed in the latest Ne Ork style, neat and immaculate—black suit, black tie, and a blackish heart—at least the latter must possess such a shade, judged Conklin from the wicked frown that had adorned the heavy face whose iron-gray mustache wore a secret sneer: it was very unusual to see a man with all the appearances of a Ne Orker not wear a self-satisfied, sleek, and fat expression, but rather a bearish and hunted look, which betokened an unhappy interior. The man had laid down a heavy black

cigar three-quarters burned, with ashes still clinging to the end of it as if waiting miserly to have the last faint breath of smoke sucked out, upon the desk, as he hastily rose.

"You are a paradox, Mammon," said Satan, waving his hand carelessly in answer to the profound salute. "When I meet you away from your office, you have the air of a man whose mind is free from worry and fret; but here you expose an entirely different complexion. One would almost conclude that the job were too big for you, or else that you found it difficult to fit yourself into your new surroundings since moving from the old buildings. I'll bet you are gruff as a wolf to the spirits, old boy!"

"Why not, your majesty?" replied the other nervously, and he saluted again in the manner of sycophant. "They come here to be punished, do they not? Why be pleasant to them?"

"No, you are wrong, Mammon—they are consigned to our apartments for cor-

rection. How many times have I told you that you must forget those old-fashioned ideas we used to have about punishment? The times have changed, and we, who are not governors of the universe but merely servants of the almighty powers, must needs change with them. If we had had absolute wisdom and truth in the early days, we should have known better than we did; but we are only poor, weak devils after all! Do not forget that we are children of the age, now and always. How can we perceive or comprehend more than others, who may have even less intelligence and revelation than we, of universal things? We can not, so the *scholars* say, and they know. Therefore remember this, and write it upon your pad so that you may keep it in sight and in mind continually: we are ministers of correction, not of punishment; we shape for the future, not kick about the past. Are you not happy? Do you begrudge the poor spirits even a place in our

midst? You are not the owner of this fortress, but merely a servant acting under my authority. Further: although you have to deal harshly with the souls who come here for correction, especially in regard to money matters, smile in their faces and make them feel at least that you are a friend. Be like the women, Mammon, who gossip terrible things about their so-seeming friends, and yet smile upon the objects of their jealousy whenever they meet face to face. In other words, as a member of the under-world, be under-worldly."

"Yes, majesty," answered the cringing treasurer.

"I forgot for the moment that I have a friend with me, Mammon, to whom I should like to introduce you! Mr. Conklin, Mr. Mammon. Mr. Mammon is one of our old standbys, Brother. I don't know what we should do without him. He is one of our chief agents, if not the chief, to the upper world whence you come. He deals in mortgages of all

kinds, but his specialty is real estate. He holds a first mortgage on most of the large cities in the world. His *chef-d'oeuvre* in that line was drawn up with the citizens and officials of Ne Ork, of which town perhaps you have heard the people speak—it is one of the sewers of the eastern coast of New Palestine. Oh, you are well acquainted with it, are you? Well, then I need not describe it. Yes, Mammon holds the first mortgage, and I—I hold the second and third, and soon I will have the fourth, when the tenement houses are raised ten or fifteen more stories and the property value increases enough to warrant it. Our business is pretty big; and, really, I do not wonder that Mammon is often worried. But nevertheless we must keep up appearances, my dear treasurer, or else people will think that we, not they, are going in the hole. You have probably been in Ne Ork long enough to know how much appearances mean, Mr. Con-

klin. Well, how are things moving here?"

"First rate, your majesty; but I was just figuring up, when you entered, how soon the correctee B'orgian would need another billion."

"How soon?"

"If you will wait just a minute, I can tell you very accurately, majesty." Mammon turned to his desk and made some calculations as rapidly as lightning. "Two days and a half—more accurately, sixty-two hours, five minutes, and twelve seconds, sir."

"Is it already being warmed for him?"

"Yes, your sanctity, it is in the electric furnace now."

"Very good. You may return to your work, Mammon—much obliged for your attention. Do you see the books in front of his desk, James? Those are the year-books, *Who's Who*, *et cetera*, which are invaluable to us in our researches. By the way, there is a bottle of spring-water to your left, Conklin. Don't care

for water? Well, well, if you are not thirsty we can walk all the better. There is much to behold in this fortress, so we'll leave our Mr. Mammon and take a look at D'orgian. This direction."

They went down the gloomy hallway until they came to a door on the right before which hung a sign marked "The Counting House," and through which they passed. The sound of chinking became audible to Conklin even through his mufflers.

"Take out your ear-plugs, James, since here no cries rise to heaven to injure the stars, and the spirits speak very rapidly because they dare not cease even for an instant from their labors."

Down the tremendous length of the room which they had entered ran a brazen grating, like the fence in front of the cashier's office in a bank, only higher and stronger, adorned with fantastic figures and devilish shapes. It was a masterpiece of bronze work, ex-

ecuted by Wite, Satan explained to his visitor. The space behind this extraordinary railing was divided into many rooms by the same material. The greenish light peculiar to Hades fluctuated through the hall, and filled it with a most melancholy atmosphere. The smells which floated into Conklin's sensitive nostrils were none the pleasantest, either—they reminded him of burning skin and rubber, and were much more pungent than the odors of evaporated dung. A white glow directly before him caught Conklin's attention.

"What is that iridescent pile?" he asked of his guide.

"It is a heap of hot gold," answered the latter. "Follow me into the room, where one of the most touching sights of Hell may be observed." He turned the massive knob of the heavy door until the correct combination resulted, and they walked into the sancta sanctorum, the inner shrine, the sacred lodge. Behold, a spirit stood before a mountain of

white gold counting it out as fast as his trembling fingers would allow.

"Keep right on with your work, M'orian," said Satan with a stern voice, "and don't you dare quit for the hundredth fraction of a second, if you care not to jump into the Circus Horribilimus! We came not to hold a colloquy with such a thing as you, but to watch the count."

The wretch shook all over from fright, yet he continued passing the hot metal from the pile to the mouth of a brazen chute which yawned at his feet. The chinking of the coin was unpleasant to Conklin, since well he knew what enormities it had produced and to what monstrosities it had given birth. Nevertheless, it had a certain fascination for him, as it has for everybody—ghosts of the shadowy dead as well as hosts of the living dead. Chink, chink, chink—at the rate of a thousand pieces a minute it was separated from its gleaming matrix five at a time by the blistered fingers,

which, being but the shadow of a reality, could not be burned away, yet which, having been sensitized to that degree which is imparted to a finger of flesh by a cancerous felon, felt pain at the hot touch in an unspeakable manner.

"Was this man a felon?" asked James with a shudder.

"No, not in the eyes of the *law* or his money-eyed worshippers; but in the light of all that is right and just, yes."

"I rather expected to see a spirit with a tremendous nose, Satan, whereas this one has a little, hollow, turned-up smeller."

"Naturally you expected what you did. The fact is that when this shade croaked, his nose, which had been but a fleshly inflation, fell in as the wind left it. Thus doth death often cause contrarities. Have you beheld enough here? Then we shall pass to the next ward."

As they left the strange counting-house and slammed the ornamented

door shut with a sharp click, James turned his bewildered glance toward his leader and whispered cautiously, "You don't seem to have any devils here to guard N'orgian and his burning pile of gold!"

"Oh you Scotchman!" cried Satan, whose grim features relaxed in a pleased smile. "You would make sure of a mountain of money, would you not? Don't worry an instant about that. Money has no value down in Hell, and furthermore the gold which you beheld is fool's gold. Did you imagine M'orgian could make off with it? Why, he is so fascinated by it that whatever pain it costs continually to count it is more than counteracted by the hypnotism of the gold, though not alleviated; and besides there is nothing else that he knows how to do."

"If then you need no protection for the sake of the gold, and are not afraid that the wretched correctee will run away from his task, why do you main-

tain such a heavy guard outside the building?"

"Ha ha! I don't wonder that you are somewhat puzzled, comrade. Most people who enter Hades are more puzzled than you, take it from me. The reason why we maintain such a heavy guard outside is to prevent all Hell from coming in to help D'orgian count his pile! ha! You have lots to learn yet. But come, we are wasting time; the cell which we are about to visit is literally a chamber of horrors, not merely on account of the characters which are confined therein but also the manner of correction which is meted out."

For some time Conklin had noticed a peculiar noise—very much like that heard in a school-room when all the naughty scholars cough with brazen throats in order to annoy the teacher. Lo! there inside the ward stood hundreds of spirits coughing violently, each of them closely attended by a guardian imp with an instrument shaped like a cornucopia in his hand.

"What are they doing in here?" cried Conklin.

"Your wit must be sharpened in order to appreciate and comprehend the wonders of Hades," replied Satan crossly. "Can you not use your eyes? In the section which we just left is stored our main pile; in this room are our coughers! Smell the odor of burning spirits? All these souls pilfered their nation's wealth for the sake of getting rich, acquiring more than ten million dollars before they died. The smaller pilferers receive their medicine upstairs. The latter swallow and cough up according to our directions coins varying from one-dollar gold-pieces to eagles; these rascals spit up double-eagles. Did you observe the funnel into which M'orgian dropped the gold after counting it? That pours them through a tunnel into this chamber—over there by the wall. Beliar, who superintends this department, receives the gold and distributes it to the imps, who must render to the furnace-tender

all the tender taken from Beliar. *We* are no tender bunch! Who bargains with the devil must pay in hard cash; no credit is allowed in our department stores.

"Now, if you watch carefully, you will notice the circulating imp, a husky devil, approach the scuttle where Beliar sits at his desk, pull the cord which governs the flow of gold, fill his bronze kettle almost to overflowing, and carry it around to each imp, who takes out a handful and feeds it to his spirit piece by piece. The ghosts must cough up each coin one hundred times before receiving the next. Of course the money becomes rather cold by the hundredth time, but what's the difference? the corrective value is the same."

At first sight the scene disgusted Conklin horribly, but he soon got used to the coughing and straining of the speculators; and after his guide had explained the system to him he took an active and curious interest in everything that went on.

"That's funny!" he suddenly exclaimed.

"What's funny?" asked Satan.

"Why, no matter how much the pilferers twist and contort their bodies in their effort to spew up a coin, even throwing themselves backward and forward and sideways almost to the floor with agony, they do not seem to stir from the spot where they stand!"

"The reason should be evident to a man of your acumen, James: they are rooted to the spot, of course."

"With what, Satan? Glue? wire? magnetic currents?"

"You've had your three, now give your tongue to the cats. With money, of course—money, the root of all evil. If you press the point, I must answer that they are hypnotized, too. These fellows, in spite of the gripes in their tripes, as the Spaniards would say, would not run away if they could, the way Jeanie Calvin did. At first the experience is wonderful to them, and

they bite at the double-eagles like cats at a young robin, as if they wished to gulp down even the feathers; but after a time the eagle becomes pretty tough for them, and then indigestion of the worst sort sets in; finally the spirit repents of his wholesale stealing, and then he has had enough of the correction to restore him to an honest state and a strong, burning desire to help the world instead of stealing from it—say in a thousand or two or three thousand years, we send him up to some elementary planet for a fresh start, perhaps in the form of an alebon, which is similar to the amoebon of this world.”

“That is very interesting, I am sure, Mr. Devil. But do the imps not become tired of their task? and how can they handle the red-hot gold without being burned?”

“They are so interested in the reform of their children, as they call the criminals, that their duties afford them the greatest pleasure. Don’t you yourself

sort of enjoy seeing these grafters have to cough up money? Certainly. So do I. Do you know, Conklin, I am looking forward to the time when all this pilfering business will be done away, and the would-be big-scale boodlers will be prevented by just measures from stripping the earth and hence be kept from the horrors of Hell. Some day, I hope, there will be no Hell, Brother Conklin."

"But what will become of you then?"

"It makes no difference. When one's work is done, why remain as a faded souvenir? Why shuffle away the hours upon the shelf like a pickled embryo? I shall not care to exist as a mere wart upon the fundament of time; my name shall linger in the mind of posterity to impress upon it moral lessons from age to age. What more could I ask for? Besides, who knows what the future has in store? Let us hope and work for the best. Stars may burn and worlds may go; man works out his own future in

the environment in which he is placed. He is real. I, a poor devil, am but a creation and instrument of man, and I must wait on him."

"I like your sentiments, Satan. You did not tell me, however, about the hands of the imps; and I should like to ask too about the peculiarly shaped objects they hold."

"The little devils feel no pain whatever from the hot gold, for the reason that they are half Jews on their mother's side and half Jews on their father's side, having been transformed from the generation of Adam into imps by the imagination of man; on the other hand, they enjoy their job immensely, and it would be difficult to tear them away; they would swallow the gold themselves if we allowed them to, but of course we wouldn't stand for that—they would eat us out of house and home.

"The instruments they hold are cornucopiae, filled with sulfurous brimstone vapor; when the spirits seem too

slow in coughing up their dough, they clap the cornua over their heads and choke them thus into retching. It would not pay to be too ceremonious here, although, seeing the past grandeur of these robbers, the imps always beg pardon afterwards and give them two double eagles to swallow for the next meal."

"Who is that thin fellow yonder—seems green at the business?"

"You mean the sallow spirit over there just being choked into submission by a cornucopia? Why, that is Stonie-girl. He came here but a short while ago. He finds it easy enough to swallow the coin, but much more difficult to vomit it up; he is weazened anyway, and his organs were in bad shape when he arrived. Should you care to speak to him for a minute? He was a great curiosity at first, because his fame preceded him here, but the spirits and the imps got disgusted with him because he smelt so vile."

"Phew, Devil! He stinks like hell! What is that odor? We used to shoot pole-cats up where I lived in the country, but they never hurt my nostrils like this fellow."

"Well, you see, he came so horribly caked with turpitude that we had to immerse him in hot oil to soften him up, and to our surprise and dismay it made him stink all the worse, although what do we care so long as it only gives more offense to his neighbors? Hell-o, Stoniegirl! Brother Conklin would like to say a word when you have coughed up your double-eagle—make it fast!"

"I trust you enjoy your dinner, Mr. Stoniegirl," said Conklin with a grin. "Don't you get real hungry before breakfast?"

"This is no trust company—no tru-u-u-uh-ucha-uch-oh-koh-uch-cha—"

"Leave him alone, James. There are better objects to observe. Come along. I will be retching before long myself if I stay here. The other side of the build-

ing contains a correction-hall of extraordinary interest, so thither we shall direct our steps. You have heard of Dis, have you not? He has charge of the east-side, where we are now going; Beliar, whom you saw in the belching department, directs the west-side; and Mammon, whom we addressed in the office, is the general superintendent of the fort and too the whole circle. Here we are—step in quietly, so that you will not disturb the court.”

They had entered a judgment-hall. Behind a low desk on a bench sat the demon called Dis, the famous justice, surrounded by his associates.

“This is about the only court in the world where justice is not bought and sold,” said Satan sadly. “If a bribe should even be attempted, both the briber and the bribee would be thrown without mercy into the Horrible Circle, and thence into the vain void of very vacuum; but safe to say it never happens. The judges are, commencing at

the extreme left: Dismay, Disapproval, Dissatisfaction, Discuss, Disassociate, Disconnect, Disgust, Disabled, Disavow, Disentery, and Distress last, he of the long hair; Dis is of course in the middle, as you might have judged by his disinterested air. There are no lawyers or jewry, either. The prisoners, whom you can see standing in barred cells attended each by a demon with a garrot in his hands, are tried one by one and then executed each right in his cage where all can partake of the disagreeable spectacle, as many times as he took dollars for favorable judgment in his previous capacity on earth as judge; then they are revived by means of an electric application, which is found in each cell, and put to the fiery torture, which consists of sending just as much electric current through them as they can endure, at a signal given by Dis. It is very inspiring to see them go up in flames all together. No mask is allowed. But I am telling you too much, for you can watch it all

yourself, and my speaking bothers the bench."

They sat down by the wall in chairs which had been provided for visitors, since there was no gallery. They beheld Dis extend his awful arm and point to a prisoner. "Guilty or—guilty?" he demanded in hollow tones of his associates. "Guilty!" they replied mournfully. The arm was extended again, this time toward a disk upon the wall fashioned like the face of a clock: immediately the hand upon it, the hand of fate, revolved until it stopped at the number which designated the entire sums taken as bribes by the criminal during his term of office. Then the demon who had been waiting with malicious eagerness garroted the wretch with swift motions the correct number of times, stopping only to turn on and off the reviving current between chokes. The horrid contortions of the wretch in his extreme agony grated upon Conklin's nerves just as squeaking glass grates upon a neuras-

thenic, making him sick to his stomach; twice he almost fainted, but he recalled his wandering senses before they had left his forehead. Even Satan was compelled to hide his face in his hands; the judges writhed as they watched, fascinated; the other prisoners gasped with horror, some of them trying in vain to turn away, attracted like a mother to her daughter's execution on the gallows, others staring with eyes sticking out of their hollow skulls, and still others dropping to the floor in a faint. When at last this dreadful task was over, Dis raised his awful arm once more, and the next rascal was given his medicine.

"Now watch!" whispered the Devil, after all in the hall had been treated. "Now comes the exciting moment!"

Dis rose to his feet, towering terribly. "Have any of you wretches anything to say?" he shouted. There was no reply—the voice had been garroted out of them. "Then turn on the current!" he yelled.

A flame of greenish hue shot through the immense hall. Brimstone fumes combined with a noisome, sulfurous stench came to the nostrils of the travelers, drowning out the odor of scorched spirit-flesh.

"Ha ha!" Dis cried, waving his hands in the air frantically. "Give it to them! Soak it to them!"

"Hell and damnation!" muttered Satan—"he has no business to get so excited, a judge of his distinction!"

"Now the reviver!" shouted Dis, still gesticulating wildly.

The deed was done. The criminals had received the first instalment of their dues. Satan stood up and clutched Conklin by the sleeve.

"Let us depart while the memory of their correction is still vivid," he said hoarsely. "The rest of their treatment is similar to that which you observed on the other side: they are shipped upstairs, where they are forced to swallow their previous judgments, which are con-

densed into hard, round pellets and heated to a white heat. Others, who have been waiting in a box outside, are brought into the court-room to fill the empty places."

"Do the justices get no rest?" demanded Conklin, who had just found his voice after the severe strain upon his nerves.

"Why should they? Do I receive any rest? Does God rest? Those who work in the behalf of humanity do not seek for easy paths. Let us depart."

Arm in arm they passed out of the heavy fort. The great Corrector felt the human hand that lay in his shake and tremble. He looked at his companion pityingly, and felt compassion on him when he noticed how pale and drawn was his countenance.

"For pity's sake, man, don't take the correction of a bunch of rascals so much to heart. You can do them little good now, for their fate has already been decided. Seek rather to prevent your earth-

ly brethren from committing such crimes themselves. Do your duty to the living, letting the dead pity the dead."

"I know, but great Scott, what a doom! I was thinking more about the past in my own life, Satan—worrying."

"You'll do, my boy, you'll do! Forget what mistakes you may have made so far, and let bygones be bygones. In assisting your fellows who need your help you can cross off the old score, if you feel sure that there is one against you; but above all things, don't worry. What would happen to Hell if I began to worry? Why it would go all to blazes. Be a man, and do good. This is the only life-time you'll have, and already it is half spent; make the best of the rest of it.

"I wonder whether you would take an interest in the great forest fire. Yes, I'll send them a telepham at once commanding them to hold the flames back until we arrive; but it's quite a distance off—perhaps—we won't take the trouble to walk—we'll fly over." Suiting his actions to

his words, he lifted his comrade up as previously when they had begun their journey; and carried him through the air more swiftly than any eagle that darts down from a lofty ledge to seize a fish in the clear waters, and set him gently upon his feet within sight of a large forest, the presence of which as an organ of correction was a surprise to the ever-bewildered Scotchman, whose nerve, however, remained always with him.

"What is this for?" he queried.

"For-rest," replied Satan.

"Are you the chief for-rester?"

"I surely am no wooden Redman, my child. Behold! they are about to touch the match to the grove. Those trees appear to be white with golden leaves, *nicht wahr?* They have sprung up from the ghoully corpses of souls which we planted, and watered with condensed oxygen, and exorcised; their leaves are gilt wafers of guilt which developed from the stains on the seeds, and their buds are the fruits of evil deeds. Can

you discern objects creeping through the branches? Those are other souls which, having been transformed into greedy monkeys, are trying to grasp the shining foliage. Ha ha! they will burn!"

Hardly had Satan finished speaking when the flames, started by the torch-bearing imps, began to sweep through the trees with awful blast. The forest shrieked and moaned, and the grasping apes howled in agony and mortal fear. It was the most wonderful spectacle that Conklin ever saw.

"Whom do you correct thus cruelly?" asked the latter in a whisper.

"The trees are souls that cut down the forests of Nature ruthlessly when they lived in the flesh; who left branches, tall stumps and crooked trunks in their wake as they cut through the glorious woods in order to gain a few paltry dollars with which to make a vain show before their fellows; the monkeys are souls that abused special privileges and monopolies for their own pecuniary advantage re-

gardless of the rights, comforts and benefits of the public; that stole lands and other natural and public properties, such as coal, woods, petroleum pockets, and national resources of whatever kind; that cheated the Indians; that forced up the price of real estate on which stood no buildings; that robbed the nation in any way; and the lawyers and congressmen who protected them."

"How about those that monkeyed with the price of real estate where there were buildings?"

"They are cleansed in another place. Shall we fly thither?"

"If you please, Devil,—this conflagration frightens and sickens me."

Again the Demon seized his visitor with his powerful hands and bore him off like the wind. They alighted before a large city that glistened and sparkled in spite of the intense gloom that surrounded it. From their hill it looked very beautiful with its nucleus of immense buildings and protoplasm of

shady suburbs, except that on closer inspection the latter appeared to be composed mainly of tenement houses crouching in an ugly manner next to one another, with scarcely the width of a knife-blade between them.

"That lovely city is built of compressed oxygen; it rises at a word from me. Within the wretched outskirts are the spirits of real-estate dealers and all of their class who pushed up the price of land and houses and constructed tenements and various buildings for speculation, and jewed people in general: they receive charts, designs on transparent paper, and blue-prints, which they must work over and study out as if to explain to innocent purchasers, but which they never finish, because the flames quickly cut them off. In the town proper are landlords who charged exorbitant rent or who allowed bad conditions to obtain in their buildings; proprietors of factories where unsanitary and dangerous conditions brought woe to the workmen,

or who abused child laborers, women laborers, and men laborers in any way whatever; merchants and producers who forced unjust prices; civil and uncivil grafters; white-slavers; pimps and whoremongers who coerced their stock in trade; food adulteraters; Jews who burnt buildings for fire-sales, without causing death; Jews who caused fire for the sake of insurance, without causing death; immoral, degenerate and jingoistic newspaper men, who receive torture first at the hands of printers' devils: plumbers who did poor jobs on purpose or otherwise and who extorted extravagant prices; burglars, and city thieves of whatever profession; and strikers who sought to destroy property or to injure strike-breakers. Anybody else who has lived uncivilly that I may have left out is put in. When they are all pursuing their criminal trades without a thought of danger, happy in their misdeeds, the match is applied and the whole city burns up. Oh, it is a great display. Ha!

there she goes—the fire-warden just received my telepham.”

Then was a sight to see. Wholly absorbed the travelers stood almost breathless upon the hill watching the pitiless flames work their destruction. One by one the tall buildings tottered and fell; the smaller houses were more swiftly consumed. Conklin could imagine the poor wretches caught here and there and roasted alive with quivering nerves. Gasping, he shut his eyes and rubbed the pit of his stomach.

“I pity them!” he uttered hoarsely.

“So do I,” replied Satan with an arch smile; “but what else did you expect to find in the Pit of Correction? Did you ever see a crooked man made straight by the laying on of ordinary hands? Not on your sweet life. These spirits are gradually purged. Once a week I recreate both embers of souls and ashes of the town, of which after a fire, as you can see for yourself, there is little left. It is all right. They receive thus the weekly

edition, as I like to call the conflagration, of their treatment; oftener than that would be likely to destroy their nervous systems altogether."

"But I do not quite understand what becomes of the shades from the time of the fire to the next recreation, Archfiend."

"They are in a form similar to absolutely unselfish love—they do not exist: because the pyrotechnical application cleanses them so thoroughly for the moment; nevertheless, each spirit, though naught but embers, remembers. Thus between fires they have time for reflection, free even from disturbance from their fellows, whom they themselves can not see, and whose presence they can not feel."

"Yet, Devil—the pain must be dreadful!"

"Dreadful? to souls that heeded not the pain of others while alive? Sweet, boy, sweet—sweet and full of lovely correction. Well, this piece of fire-works is

over. Near-by lies an orchard which I know will be of interest to you, and if you are not averse we shall walk there—just a short way beyond the next hill.”

So together they walked, neither saying a word: James’s mind dwelt upon the awful pyrotechniques he had viewed almost against his will; and Satan was thinking—who knows?

When they reached the top of the slope behind which lay the orchard, they heard the sound of singing. It was loud, but far from charming.

“What in the deuce!” cried Satan. Then he laughed, and pulled his visitor by the sleeve. “Did you ever hear that melody before? The basso surely possesses a bully voice! Why, it is the song of the Minotaur. See him standing by the orchard?”

“Of all things!” Conklin exclaimed when he perceived from a distance the horridly formed monster chewing an apple between stanzas. “Is he still here?”

What is he doing? What are those torches in the orchard?"

"His duty is to prevent the spirits from getting any fruit. Torches? Ha! they are not torches, but souls burning from thirst,—souls that climbed through life regardless of the feelings of others."

"I don't like to look at him, Satan."

"Don't blame you at all—neither do I. Let's be going." He lifted Conklin once more and bore him to the 'elevator, where they waited patiently for the bell-buoy to answer the call. While they sat there, James remarked pensively:

"Wouldn't love be a better means of correction than the violent means you apply here in Hell?"

"Do you fancy that Hell was made for love? Don't you think we know our business? Have I made a study of human nature for centuries for nothing? Love, my dear fellow, should be given to little children, beginning with the cradle; and to all people who are capable of receiving and appreciating it; but

hardened rascals must undergo a severe treatment first to soften them up. *A person with a hardened heart must have the shell pounded off with a hammer before touching it with precious ointment.* Do you believe in casting pearls before swine? We love our correctees;—don't go away with the idea that we hurt them because of hate. Some day they will even thank us for their chastening."

Charon came at last, and with a business-like air, which he had learned from Mammon, he took in the Hell-master and James, and carried them downward, yet downward. His flaming eyes wheeled upward with a mournfully thoughtful expression, giving him a sad and woeful appearance: no doubt he was rue-minating over his past life as ferry-man, especially the shady side of it. For the moment he looked really religious.

CHAPTER VIII

CIRCUS HORRIBILIMUS

"GOING down! Last floor!" shouted Charon, opening the gate that leads into the lowest circle of Hell, which is the most horrible.

"How is it that I have not run across any shades being carried to the various circuses?" the Scotchman demanded as they stepped out of the 'elevator. "Has the business stopped?"

"Not by any means," answered Satan grimly. "They are being brought down by the back way while you are with us, according to my strict behest. I did not wish you to be dis-turbed by their mournful howls and despairing complaints, which are enough to unnerve a dead man. But let us not dwell upon that subject. I do not like to think of it. I am with it too much as it is. Would you like my job?"

Conklin shook his head sadly, emphatically, decisively.

"Of course not," the Devil continued, "any more than I would like yours. Each man to his own work, which is his in spite of its disagreeable side. Every job has unpleasant features."

He took his protegee firmly by the shoulder to give him courage. "Prepare now to behold hideous things," he said. "Hold yourself together with all your will. Clench your teeth and stiffen your thumbs. We have entered the bottom of the Pit, where the worst and most incorrigible of the wicked souls are violently corrected. Some people think there are no criminals that can not be made good citizens by applied theory, but they deceive themselves. I have had enough experience with people to know that there are many whose motives are hopelessly and helplessly evil. Shall we waste time by being tender with them? Tenderness only makes them worse. Treating them with kindness gives them the more op-

portunity to work their cunning. Absence is their best condition."

Conklin shuddered. "Who are these dreadful culprits?" he cried hoarsely.

"Murderers who killed useful people; women who influenced others not to have dear little children; all parties to abortion; criminals who went beyond the ordinary stages of crime in any direction; teachers who selfishly monkeyed with the minds of trusting pupils, especially teachers with artificial systems of pseudo-philosophy and theology; jealous, vain, selfish and inefficient generals; persons who by manufacturing and selling intoxicating liquors caused drunkenness, abject poverty, starvation of soul and body, crime, useless suffering, disease, deformity and degeneracy. It would do more harm than good to go into details about the foul acts of these abominable shades, yet you will benefit by seeing some of our methods of correction, of which we are justly proud.

"This black building at our left is the

Inquisitors' Dungeon, where all who tortured others merely for religious reasons are broken and re-broken. We borrowed many of our modes from Christian institutions such as the Inquisition, hospitals, mad-houses, asylums, homes for neurasthenics, and dental offices. You may be sure that we have our breaking tortures performed with religious scrupulousness—ha! Do you see that shed built on the main building as an extension? There the nihilists, bomb-throwers, and destructive socialists, and fire-bugs, having enjoyed picnics in their own section of this circus over to the west, are cast into vacuum-mills and ground up to nothing. The beauty of their correction is that they are corrected once for all—when we finish with them, they are finished—not even an electron is left. But it is right. Now let us use our eyes; you'd better put your pads in your ears and hold your fingers up against them."

They crossed a threshold which seemed to Conklin to be running with

blood. Dreadful presentiments passed through his mind. He held himself together manfully, however, and tagging on to Satan's arm staggered into the main business hall. Sounds too awful to mention beat his sensitive ear-drums almost into pulp, and sights too horrible to speak of met his tender eyes. With a cry he fell in a dead faint.

"Hell-o!" he dimly heard a voice say some time afterward—how long, he could not tell. "Coming around again?"

"I guess so," said the patient weakly. "Is that you, Satan, banging tin-pans and drums and kettles in my ears?"

"No, that was the drummer-boy, dear James."

"The hammering hurts my head," moaned the latter.

"That is only the Hamma-melis which I am rubbing on your forehead."

"I see things, oh, I see things!"

"So do I."

"What was that funny story you were telling me when the gun went off and the corpses jumped?"

"Funny story? I wasn't telling you a—oh, yes, certainly," answered the Chief of Hades in a soothing tone—he realized that James's brain was in a critical condition and that his mind demanded assent, not contradiction, "certainly, of course—ha ha! I had begun to relate the tale of how Patrick McCarthy met Michael Sullivan in the shower department."

"Tell some more, please!" begged Conklin plaintively.

"Well, you know, Pat and Mike had been good friends on earth; but it happened that Pat seemed to be religious there, while Mike made no such pretensions. At any rate, they both of them threw cold water to beat the Dutch, and as a result they had to take their medicine when they kicked the bucket.

"Mike was awfully surprised to meet his old friend face to face, because he expected never to see him again.

"'Phwat an ivint!' he cried out with an oath.

“ ‘Th’ divil of a rrascal ye be!’ replied Pat with a string of cuss words longer than Brooklyn Bridge and the Hudson tunnels. ‘Sure an’ phwy don’t yez git in out o’ th’ rrain? How in Hill did yez happen t’ coome here?’

“ ‘Oi kicked the bucket, Pat,’ says Mike oily like, ‘an’ whin Oi arrived at me station, th’ waterr was jist commincin’ t’ land. Sure an’ how did yez git here yesilf?’

“ ‘Av coorse Oi kicked th’ damned bucket, too, Moike; but as they war pull-in’ me oop in th’ pale o’ th’ choich, th’ bottom av th’ damned ting fill out, an’ th’ nixt ting Oi ’noo an imp of Hill had me by the nick!’ ”

“Ha ha!” shouted Conklin, “ha ha! ha ha!” His face suddenly resumed its natural expression after his hilarious outbreak, and the color returned to his cheeks. He breathed deeply and sat up.

“What a smell!” he ejaculated, turning his head around to discover whence came the dis-comforting odor. Beside

Satan, who was just putting the bottle of witch-hazel away in his hip pocket, stood Charon, the ancient 'elevator boy, with mouth gaping wide open and belching forth its fetid breath.

"Where am I?" he cried in alarm as he put his fingers to his nose.

"You are with friends, my boy," answered Satan, patting him on the shoulder. "There is no cause for dis-trust. You are in the 'elevator, and we are taking you home."

James sank back on the plush cushions like a man who has recovered from a bad vision. "T'ell Charron—t'ell Charon—that—if—he—had time to go around from one circus to another, the shades would need no other corrector!" he murmured.

Satan almost doubled up from laughter, and then motioned to Charon to go back to his lever, which, as they were ascending very slowly in order not to jar James, had been fastened in the notch for the lowest speed. The boy carefully

shoved the bar out several notches and sent the car soaring upward like a bird trying out its wings in the morning air.

"We are nearly there," said the Devil to his visitor after a long period of silence. "It has been a great pleasure to have you with us, even for so short a time; and I am glad that you are in such a good condition after your many wonderful yet harrowing experiences. Had I not known that you were extra strong, I should never have told you and shown you what I have about the human race and its manners after death. Now is there any question you would like to ask before we leave Hell?"

"Yes, one question," replied Conklin as he staggered to his feet and clung to Satan for support. "What is your t'elephone—I mean t'elepath number?"

"All paths lead toward me. My number is Glaza—22147, which reaches Mammon, too. Beelzebub's number which also connects with—who is that scholarly devil? oh, yes, Gog—I am al-

ways forgetting names—is Mourningside 3305. Don't hesitate for an instant whenever you think you need me or wish to ask my advice, which is free to all.

"Here we are at the ground floor. Wait for me, Charon. How dark it is! What's happened to the lights? No matter, I know the way,—don't be afraid. Yes, keep your asbestos coat for a souvenir—you may need it some day."

He seized Conklin scientifically and bore him swiftly up through the cold crater of the mountain to his distant domicile, where he placed him tenderly in bed, sleeping.

"Whether peacefully slumbering or awake and kicking, man is sure to follow me," he said to himself as he flew back to the 'elevator, where the transformed water-rat impatiently awaited him with wheeling eyes revolving toward the ground.

"Going down!" cried Charon as he threw over the lever; and they descended to the place which was their home.

END

ERRATUM

On Page 108 it should read:

“ ‘*MARK* well my name, 'twas spread
by foolish Rumor;

*My books would have some value, had
they humor! ’*



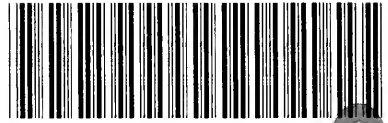
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